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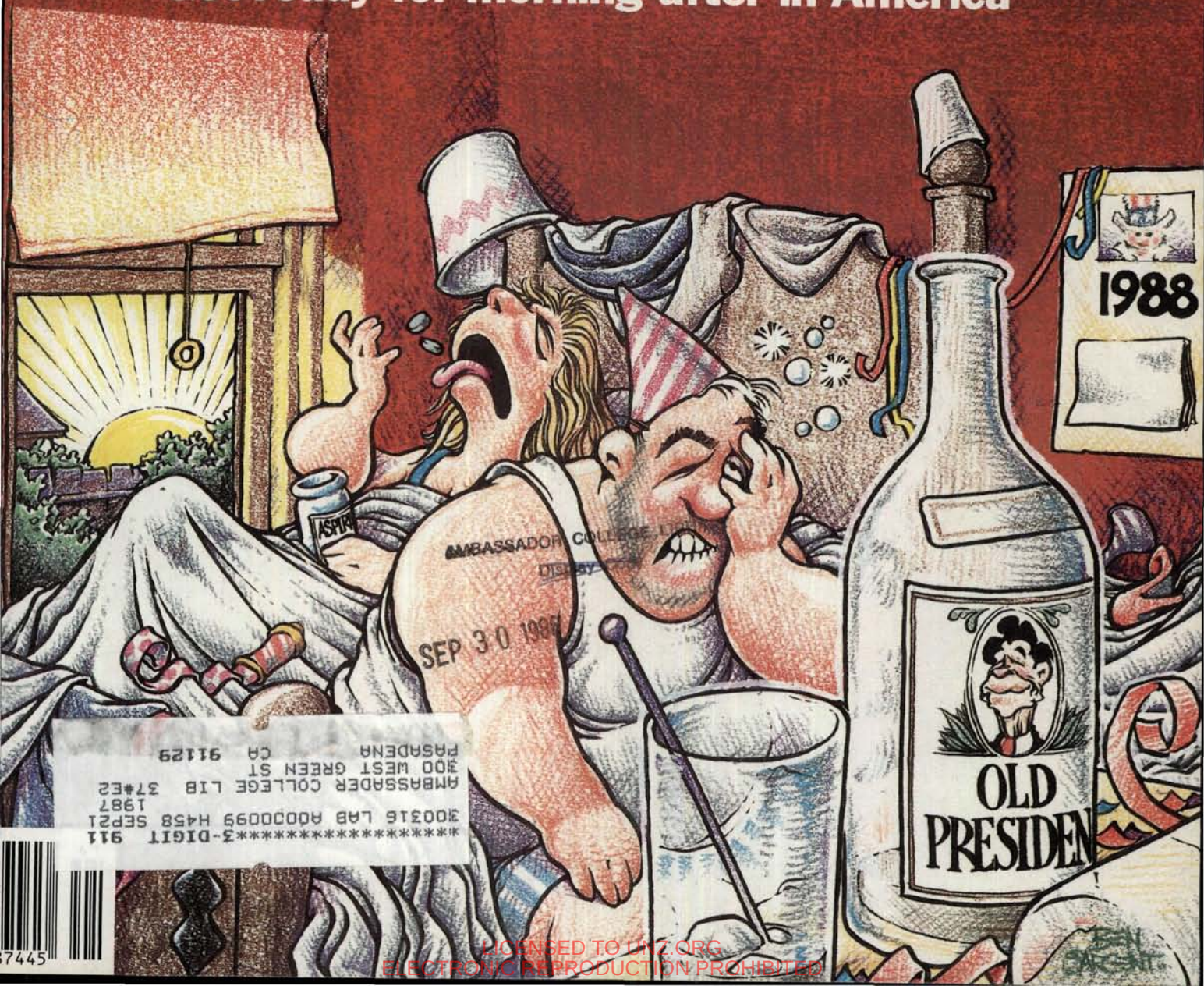

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FROM WASHINGTON

SPY SPIN CONTROL

On May 20, 1978, the FBI arrested two Soviets working at the United Nations for espionage. Three weeks later, in the streets of Moscow, an American businessman was dragged from his car at a traffic light and thrown in a Soviet prison. This episode was reported on an inside page of the *New York Times*.

Over the next year, the name of Francis Jay Crawford, the businessman, appeared in 68 articles in major American newspapers and magazines, according to Nexis, the computerized data base. By comparison, as of September 23, three weeks after the arrest of journalist Nicholas Daniloff, Daniloff's name had appeared in 433 articles, many of them on the front page. There have even been 17 articles referring to Crawford since Daniloff's arrest—not too many fewer than in the same period following his own arrest eight years ago.

In 1978, with virtually no hullabaloo, the spies and the businessman were released to their respective ambassadors. In an apparent deal, the businessman was tried and convicted of changing currency on the black market (although key prosecution witnesses got his hotel room wrong and claimed to have met him at a time when he was actually in the United States), and then was sent home. Shortly afterward, the two Soviet spies were exchanged for five dissidents and a pledge not to execute a captured American agent. There was not a peep of protest. *Time* called the deal "an upbeat note" in superpower relations.

It took the Reagan administration a little while to figure out that the Daniloff story was going to play differently because it involves a journalist. At first the administration expected the usual pressure not to let an "unfortunate incident" block the search for peace, the summit, etc. Instead, this one has turned out to be a freebie for hard-liners. It seems that journalists, contrary to cliché, take a more principled view about dealing with the Soviets than the conservative business community does. In 1978, Jay Crawford's employer, International Harvester, answered charges that it was not doing enough to free its imprisoned executive with the indignant retort (according to *Newsweek*) that it had gone so far as "asking Senator Charles Percy of Illinois to talk personally with Soviet Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin." Wow, that's getting tough.

The journalist angle has created some confusion about why it would be wrong to swap Nicholas Daniloff for the arrested Soviet agent in New York, Gennady Zakharov. The mistaken reason is deep offense at the idea of morally equating a reporter with a spy. Nick Daniloff is not a spy, but presumably there are American spies (not reporters, I hope) courageously serving their country in Moscow. They will be amused, if not offended, to hear conservative hard-liners, of all people, demeaning their trade compared to the lofty calling of journalism. The correct reason to refuse a straight swap is the practical one: we can't allow the Soviets to believe they can just grab an innocent American to trade every time we grab a genuine spy.

From the practical perspective, then, what would be wrong with the deal everyone seems to be drifting toward, unless mounting right-wing pressure prevents it? That would be some variation of the Crawford model: their spy for our non-spy plus something else, such as a dissident or two. To evaluate that deal, you have to ask what we would have done with Zakharov if Daniloff never had been seized. The answer is that we might well have expelled him with no quid pro quo at all. This is what we usually do with Soviet citizens caught spying in this country. It's true that, unlike most, Zakharov has no diplomatic immunity. That may be a violation of espionage etiquette, but is it a scandalous difference? A Soviet spying for the Soviet Union is not like an American spying for the Soviet Union. There's no reason we should want to send the hapless Zakharov—a low-level operative in any event—up the river for life. As for his value as an informant, there's a limit to how much our "interrogators" could get out of him, even if he had much of value to tell them. This is America, after all.

In short there's no doubt that, if it weren't for the Daniloff twist, the chance to win freedom for a brave dissident in exchange for a petty apparatchik like Zakharov would have been greeted by right-wingers as a triumph of hardheaded Reagan diplomacy. So how does it make us the losers if they throw in Daniloff as well? How does this make the dissident a mere "fig leaf"?

Suppose I were to grab George F. Will as a hostage and offer to trade him for a copy of *Newsweek*. If the editor of *Newsweek* persuades me to throw in two dollars plus George F. Will, it's hard to see how I've been rewarded for my crime, or how I've been given any incentive to grab Jane Bryant Quinn in the future. If a Daniloff-plus-dissident deal is a "fig leaf" for anyone, it's a "fig leaf" for the Soviets. In practical terms, they will have gained nothing for their troubles.

In the larger diplomatic game, the "winner" of such a trade depends on which side is perceived as the winner. In politics, this is known as "spin control." It's ironic, therefore, that it's the hard-liners who are making it impossible for us to free an imprisoned American without being perceived as having suffered a humiliating defeat at the hands of the wily Russians.

This reverse spin control has already cast our side as the loser in the preliminary deal that got Daniloff and Zakharov released to the custody of their respective ambassadors. That negative spin, in turn, is creating pressure against a final resolution. But why should this be perceived as a loss for us? The denial of bail to Zakharov appears to have been an accident, a case of missed cues, in the first place. (This was also a repeat of the 1978 episode, in which a magistrate unexpectedly set bail for the two arrested Soviets at $2 million each.) Why should Nick Daniloff have languished in a KGB prison to avoid our rectifying an error?

With a bit of skill, stage two of the deal can be presented as a barely disguised backing down by the Soviet thugs. Even a patently phony show trial of Daniloff before releasing him would just compound their embarrassment. All it takes is just a bit of positive spin control.

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"...great revolutions..." *"We know lots of revolutions, great revolutions, and magnificent people, who after taking over power, produced systems that were much worse than the ones they destroyed. We don't want to make this mistake. We will not."*

--Polish Solidarity leader Lech Walesa in a "Morning Edition" interview in Gdansk, Poland, with National Public Radio's European correspondent Neal Conan.

"I never share blame, I never share credit, and I never share desserts. It's just not my style."

--Beverly Sills, New York City Opera general director, in an interview on National Public Radio's "Morning Edition."

"Drunk they (the Russians) defeated Napoleon. Drunk they beat Hitler. Drunk they could win against NATO."

--Edward Luttwak, defense analyst and author of "The Pentagon and the Art of War," talking with National Public Radio's "Morning Edition" host Bob Edwards about Soviet military strength.

"We are so different, and yet, we are all one." *"I've never seen so many women, of so many different ages, colors, sizes and shapes, and I think it's amazing. We are so different, and yet, we are all one."*

--A delegate to the United Nations' World Conference on Women, talking with National Public Radio's "All Things Considered" co-host Susan Stamberg in Nairobi, Kenya.

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CORRESPONDENCE

BIDEN TIME

To the editors:

I agree with much of what Brit Hume wrote about Joseph Biden ("Mighty Mouth," September 1) in descriptive terms, but I couldn't disagree more with his concluding judgments. During the recent fireworks exchange between Biden and Secretary of State George Shultz on the explosive issue of apartheid, Biden came across as agonizingly sincere in his abhorrence of that repugnant policy. In repeating Biden's critics' remarks that he has engaged in "insufferable moralizing," Hume provides credibility for a charge that is void. Morality and courage are exactly what is missing in the present administration's policy toward South Africa, and Biden has more effectively expressed his outrage with a compelling sense of justice than anyone else has.

I don't think, as Hume does, that Biden's mouth runs ahead of his mind. Perhaps he more honestly and candidly grapples with perplexing public policy dilemmas and admits their complexities. While Reagan has simple "I'll-take-care-of-the-hurt-with-this-wonderful-medicine" answers, Biden poses questions more complicated in nature.

If it's morality that Biden is accused of excessively expounding, then that's fine with me. For the morality that Joe Biden expresses is one of broadness and tolerance articulating a message of inclusiveness, but of social responsibility as well.

DENNIS P. JAFFE
New Brunswick, New Jersey

To the editors:

Mr. Hume notes that Senator Biden has reasonably orthodox liberal viewpoints, leaving the impression that the senator's primary failing is his inability to be quiet. But if Senator Biden is saying the right things, why should we care? In this eerie era of Reaganism, the last thing that we need to do is criticize liberals who talk too much.

GREG ABBOTT
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

AMBER WAVES OF STRAIN

To the editors:

TNR's recent analysis ("Stuffing Farmers, Stiffing Peasants," August 11 & 18) accurately reflected many of the failings of the 1985 farm bill. But it neglected perhaps the most significant result: the bill is bankrupting hundreds of thousands of family farmers, creating the worse rural economic crisis since the 1930s.

Your editors dismissed as expensive and futile an alternative to this policy that would eliminate the costly deficiency payment to farmers and still allow family farmers to earn a reasonable return. Advanced by Senator Tom Harkin and others, and supported by a coalition of farm groups, this proposal would establish a supply management system to limit production while raising loan rates to pay farmers a fair price. Since world commodity prices closely follow the U.S. domestic prices, Third World farmers and economies would also benefit from this plan.

Selling underpriced exports will no longer solve the farm crisis; markets available to the U.S. are shrinking, and other exporting countries will continue to offer even lower prices to maintain a share of that market. Paying farmers a fair price for their products, while eliminating surplus production, will allow most of the two million family farmers to remain on their land and continue the system of agriculture that has served this country well.

R. KEITH STROUP
The League of Rural Voters Education Project
Washington, D.C.

TRADE FABRICATION

To the editors:

Mark Hosenball is a Washington reporter for Fairchild Publications, and that association in and of itself might explain the substantial lack of understanding of the textile problem as indicated by his article ("Wally-Gate," July 28).

The ideological and foolishly blind adherence to the principle of free trade, which is not practiced by any other country around the world, as evidenced by the obvious trade barriers to our exports to Japan, Taiwan, Korea, Brazil, and India among others, has produced a trade deficit of $170 billion for the United States in 1986. Our Far Eastern trading partners today enjoy a trade surplus of some $70 billion with the United States, whereas 16 of 20 of our major manufacturing industries have all fallen into deficit. And to make matters worse, the same is now happening to the great agricultural establishment of this country.

As for Wally Lenahan, and any other ex-government officials who allegedly use their past knowledge for personal gain to the detriment of the country, I strongly support Senator Strom Thurmond's initiative to tighten the laws regarding the activities of high government employees after they leave the service of our country.

G. P. ELDEN
Executive Vice President
American Hoechst Corporation
Somerville, New Jersey

TRUMPED-UP CHARGES

To the editors:

Eliot Cohen, in his review "Uncertain Trumpets" (September 1), commits the cardinal error of confusing a history/memoir, the Arthur Hadley book, with a polemic, the Gary Hart/William Lind book.

Of course, the latter is simpler, more one-sided, and selective; it is an argument for specific changes in the present military system, not an analysis of the etiology of that system. What is remarkable is how compatible the two books are in their identification of similar deficiencies in the United States military.

Clearly Mr. Cohen's critique of the Hart/Lind book serves his own polemic: the World War II generation has sounder, more sober values than the superficial postwar generation.

JEFF SCHWEHN
Albuquerque, New Mexico

THE WRONG SPIRIT

TRB demonstrates the wrong spirit at the beginning of his otherwise fine drug article ("The Right Spirit," September 8), implying that Deanna Young and other youngsters are being encouraged to "spy and rat on their parents." Nonsense.

Neoliberals, neoconservatives, and whatever TNR considers itself have long contended that people should be held responsible for their actions. Surely parents who provide an unwholesome environment for their children should suffer some consequences.

STEVE SCHNEIDER
New York, New York

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THE NEW REPUBLIC
OCTOBER 13, 1986

THE REAGAN HANGOVER

The Reagan revolution is an insubstantial creation. The undoubted improvement Reagan wrought in the public mood was rewarded first with a landslide re-election and now with the conventional wisdom that Reagan qualifies as the greatest leader to occupy the White House since Roosevelt. But this notion confuses the fleeting success of political popularity with lasting impact on the country's underlying problems.

DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

If by real leadership we mean persuading, pushing—above all, inspiring—the people to accept painful sacrifices in the short-term for the sake of the long-term common good, Reagan has never exercised it. By this standard, Reagan has practiced followership. Brushing aside questions about his policies with blithe appeals to "optimism," and sanctioning an unprecedented national spending spree, he has persuaded the public to forget its misgivings—to sit back, relax, and enjoy the morning in America.

The morning is giving way to the morning-after. The qualms that Reagan has managed to suppress or charm away are about to be vindicated with a vengeance. Today Reagan still has Americans asking: How does he do it? But when he retires, the charismatic spell will be over and the question will be irrelevant. Americans will begin rubbing their eyes in rueful wonder at the aftermath of his eight-year national fiesta. Then, the question will be: How did he get away with it?

The hollowness of Reagan's leadership has been amply displayed in the area where even his critics have tended to acknowledge his sweeping impact: national defense. Central to the Reagan promise in 1980 was a vision of American military might restored. Whatever you think of such tough talk (and we thought it made a good deal of sense), you cannot argue that President Reagan has asked Americans to contribute much toward the goal. Reagan embarked on a major defense buildup without raising taxes to pay for it. He borrowed the money. The resulting fiscal chaos has prompted a backlash against the buildup and a virtual freeze in the military budget. America isn't much closer to a lasting, consistent, and sensible consensus on defense policy than it was in 1980.

Reagan the president hasn't closed the alleged "window of vulnerability" in our strategic forces that Reagan the

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candidate railed about in 1980. The "window" refers to the theoretical possibility that all our land-based missiles could be destroyed in a Soviet first strike. But our strategic land-based forces today have changed little in the last six years. SDI, even if it is a solution, is still years away. And in his zeal for the "Peace Shield," Reagan neglected the small, mobile, Midgetman missile, which does offer some prospect of closing the window. Those won't be ready until 1992.

Reagan also put the world on notice that the United States would henceforth be unafraid to use military force to protect its allies and its interests around the world. "No one will dare lift a hand against us" is the way he used to put it on the campaign trail. He has proved instead that we are prepared to use force—until we ourselves have to pay the cost. The easy 1983 invasion of Grenada is the exception that proves the rule. Reagan never dreamed of proposing a draft, for example, as a means of manning the refurbished military machine. In 1983 Reagan dispatched troops to Lebanon, saying that American credibility in the entire

THE ZEITGEIST CHECKLIST

BY CHARLES PAUL FREUND

This Week		Last Week	Weeks on Chart
1.	RED OCTOBER	2	4

Daniloff. The Daniloff Affair continues to shoot off in all directions—U.S.-U.S.S.R. relations, the summit, the True Soviet Character, the perils of journalism, the U.N., etc.—but a calmer air is setting in. Polls indicate that for all the U.S. public knows, Daniloff might have been spying, and that Americans have no strong opinions on what the reaction should be anyway. Questions finally surfaced this week—a month late—about the timing and circumstances of Zakharov's arrest here. Daniloff isn't free yet, but the remainder of this story is a mime show.

2.	CITY OF FRIGHT	—	1

Terrorism. The attention given the ten tragic deaths-by-terror in Paris, and that city's resulting psychosis, is not surprising. France is one of a handful of nations the United States ever bothers to pay attention to, but there is also a schadenfreude here that barely speaks its name: "cowardly." France wouldn't let Libya-raiding planes fly over, but it didn't do them any good, did it? By the way, a single bomb blast last week killed ten Sri Lankans, but who cares about them?

3.	TRICKLE-DOWNER THEORY	1	5

Drugs. The fading drug frenzy has reached an interesting transition: to elitist-oriented organs—*New York Times* letters, "MacNeil/Lehrer" commentary, TNR cover story, op-ed writers—the story is now viewed as irrational panic. To middle-brow organs—*Time*, *USA Today*, made-for-TV movies—it's still a national crisis. Meanwhile, out on the edge, the "alternative" weeklies are starting a backlash with pieces celebrating the joys of marijuana.

4.	PLAY IT AGAIN	—	1

Sports. Pro football's experiment in perfect officiating—the replay ref—has already come in for withering criticism; the calls *still* aren't perfect. That this precision is a big deal is another sign—as if one were needed—of the game's bloated status. Chalk one up for baseball, which still factors in officiating errors as breaks that even out over time.

5.	READ MY CLIPS	*	3

Literacy. The literacy bandwagon is getting crowded and gaining fast on the drug crusade. Now it's attracting newspaper publishers who were beaten to the punch on this latest crusade *by television*. The Gannett Foundation is giving away a half million dollars to promote adult literacy, while the American Newspaper Publishers Association has started a program to help newspapers start literacy projects.

6.	GETTING RIGHT WITH GOD	—	1

1988. The Pat Robertson presidential campaign is quite a spectacle: while he awaits his three million supporting signatures, his detractors are reduced to helpless fulmination. They can remind people every day that Robertson says he talks personally with God, that he skipped out on serving in Korea—and it makes no difference. His followers are completely insulated from such a debate. As for the Republican strategists who created this majority-party monster, they've led the party down the garden path of righteousness.

7.	YELLOW JOURNALISM	*	2

Philippines. The Philippines are, briefly, newsworthy again thanks to Cory Aquino's state visit, but the popular angle somehow remains Imelda and her shoes. Imelda turned up both on network TV and in boxed sidebars to the Aquino visit, and the chances are that most people know more about how many pairs of shoes Aquino brought with her (six) than about the state of the communist or Moslem insurgencies.

8.	ETHNIC MELTDOWN	—	1

Fashion. Who said preppies are dead? Upper-class WASP trappings are increasingly replacing the ethnic, middle-class images that have dominated U.S. advertising for the last 20 years. Ralph Lauren and his high-WASP catalogs are particularly shameless, but Laura Ashley and others aren't far behind. The up-out-of-sight American rich have not often been desirable role models, but the rise of an educated, socially pretentious class is changing that. That this is occurring at a time of major immigration of very different-looking people is not without interest.

9.	THE STORY OF O-RINGS	*	2

NASA. The news that NASA's well-publicized O-ring fix was in fact a four-year-old solution to the problem stirred few ripples. Fewer, really, than the successful-at-last launch the agency recently enjoyed. The country seems to have little emotion left to spend on NASA's screwups; it apparently still treasures the Romance of Space, and just wants to go there. Not to worry, but nuclear power plants are now reporting O-ring concerns too.

10.	TO BE DISCONTINUED	5	2

Comics. Maybe it's just a joke that most newspaper readers turn first to the comics pages, but it's no joke that the tastes of comic strip readers have changed greatly in recent years. While critics continue to hail *Maus*, daily "story strips," with their months-long narratives, have increasingly given way to "gag-a-day" strips; it's been nine years since the last successful story strip (*Spiderman*) was introduced. TV's quick-fix catharsis is being blamed, with J.R. et al. stepping into the cultural shoes once worn by the Dick Tracys and Little Orphan Annies of the past.

* Item resurfaces in the Zeitgeist after at least one week's absence.

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We live in an increasingly interdependent world with distinctive local, regional, linguistic and religious customs. When we travel, conduct business, or entertain visitors from other countries, we can be more sensitive, productive and relaxed if we are aware of the cultural differences among us. The World Calendar has been created as a cross-cultural reference to assist communication and understanding on an international level.

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Minneapolis Tribune

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Middle East was at stake. With his re-election campaign around the corner, he bugged out as soon as it began to look like a fight. The bombing raid on Libya was a justified yet essentially risk-free gesture; Syria and Iran, two other terror bases that would be risky to attack, have been left untouched. Of course, it's easy to fault the president. It has to be admitted that on these matters the Democrats have no stomach for any serious thought, and the nation is kept hostage to their moralizing postures.

BUT THE CENTRAL promise of the Reagan revolution was a vision of painless return to prosperity. Supply-side economics was billed as a way to avoid the traditional trade-off between inflation and unemployment. It insisted that savings, work, and investment had been pent up by budget deficits, high taxes, and regulations. By making all three evils a thing of the past, supply-side economics would boost the productivity of the economy as a whole, producing a bonanza of new jobs without the usual corresponding upward pressure on prices. If tax cuts drove up the budget deficit in the short run, that would be taken care of by the surge in revenues from greater economic activity.

The jury is now in on supply-side. In the first five years of the Reagan administration, GNP growth in constant dollars was 11.7 percent. In the previous five years of Ford-Carter policies, growth was 17.2 percent. The surge in the economy that propelled Reagan to re-election in 1984 came from restarting the economy after the recession of 1981-82. It was that recession and the 10.6 percent unemployment that accompanied it that broke the back of inflation. This experience confirmed that supply-side couldn't abolish the trade-off between growth and higher prices. A savage recession was required to wipe out inflation and break the inflationary psychology that had been built into the economy.

Reagan bought recovery from the 1981-82 recession with the fiscal equivalent of MasterCard. America's credit card bill is its huge budget deficit, $230 billion in fiscal 1986. Reagan's deficits did not add to inflation, because they were financed by borrowing from abroad. That drove up the value of the dollar, which made imports cheap. The last three years' boom has more to do with a splurge of import buying than any supply-side expansion or reactivation of our productive capacity. We are now using 80.3 percent of our manufacturing capacity, compared to 79.3 percent in the last year of Jimmy Carter. In the long run—in fact in the not-so-long run—prosperity can only grow as fast as output per person. We can only consume as much as we make or trade for something else. Yet output per person-hour increased exactly three-tenths of one percent last year. Some renaissance.

Reagan's deficits are not only several times bigger than the biggest one Jimmy Carter ever ran up. They are of a different nature. Carter's deficits were largely cyclical—caused by declining government revenues and increasing expenditures during the 1979-80 recession. Reagan's deficits, however, are structural. They are the result of a legislated mismatch between federal spending and federal revenues. The editors of the *Wall Street Journal* recently proclaimed that

> annual federal revenues (taxes mainly) now stand at a historical average of 19 percent to 20 percent of GNP, while outlays are running at an unprecedented 23 percent to 24 percent of GNP. Those several percentage points of difference are the deep maw of this country's deficit, a measure of Washington's inability to decide whether to push spending back down to its traditional level or to push taxes upward toward the creation of a Europe-like welfare state. By rejecting Walter Mondale's plea for higher taxes, and by rewarding Mr. Reagan with two landslides, the electorate has made its choice abundantly clear.

Fatuous distinctions between "traditional" and "Europe-like welfare states" aside, this is precisely the choice that Reagan never had the candor—or the guts—to pose directly to the voters. Fiscal discipline according to Reagan has meant cutting back hardest on government programs that benefit the poor, the vulnerable, and the powerless. He blithely promised to leave transfer programs for the middle class such as Social Security untouched. Tax reform, perhaps the greatest economic achievement of the Reagan years, does nothing to correct the imbalance between revenues and spending that Reagan created. It only eliminates the grossest distortions of economic incentives that Reagan's own 1981 tax bill introduced.

Reagan has given us a brief boom free of inflation in exchange for a future in which both lower inflation and sustained growth will be harder to achieve. Someday our trading partners are going to want to use the dollars they've earned to buy American goods, services, and real assets. We should have something to offer them other than ever greater shares of our companies or of our national debt. Recently the administration, wising up, has attempted to bring down the trade deficit by reducing the value of the dollar with respect to the German mark and the Japanese yen. This is bound to have some effect sooner or later, but so far there's been no corresponding increase in American exports. Partly, this is due to the natural lag between devaluation and the decline in imports and boost in exports that it is supposed to achieve. Partly it reflects the fact that Japanese firms shrewdly cut profit margins in order to hold down prices and maintain their shares of U.S. markets. And partly, the trade imbalance lingers because our currency is still overvalued with respect to trading partners other than Japan and West Germany. But these are excuses. What ever happened to the economic transformation? We'll look back on the Reagan era as eight years of squandered opportunity.

WHICH BRINGS US back to productivity. The only way to make a dent in the trade deficit over the long run is to sustain rapid year-to-year increases in the amount of goods we are capable of producing per unit of input. So far, what modest gains we've achieved have been accomplished by cutting the number of workers per unit of output through automation. That is a recipe for unemployment and lower wages across the board. Indeed, this style

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of cost cutting is part of the reason unemployment is still stuck near the levels Reagan denounced as unacceptable when he took office. (It averaged 7.1 percent in 1980; it was 6.9 percent in July of this year.) The better way is to increase the productivity of the entire labor force through training, education, and infrastructure. That is how countries such as Japan and South Korea have come to outcompete us. But those are precisely the kinds of public investments that Reagan has neglected in spending the national debt on a defense buildup and cheap imports. The budget and trade deficits are dangerous because paying them off will leave America with even fewer resources for such overdue investments.

There is no sign that Reagan is about to change his ways at this late date. The most recent example of his failure to exercise true leadership was his opposition to a ten-cent-per-gallon tax on gasoline that was briefly talked about in the House Ways and Means Committee last week. The tax could have helped cut down the deficit and prevent the OPEC price increase from sticking. It would have still left gas prices far below what they were a year ago. But Reagan knows that people have already come to feel entitled to drive as much as they want at less cost in real terms than they could when he took office. Far be it from him to ask anyone to give that up. Enjoy the drive.

NOTEBOOK

□ PROFANE JUSTICE: By the time the Senate confirmed William Rehnquist as chief justice September 17, the arguments were stale, the voices were hoarse, and even the opponents just wanted to get it over with. That must be why late-surfacing but clear evidence that Rehnquist had committed perjury in his confirmation hearings created astonishingly little stir. In 1969 Rehnquist, then head of the Justice Department's Office of Legal Counsel, wrote a memorandum on the question of covert Army surveillance of domestic political groups. After this surveillance was exposed, Rehnquist testified to a Senate committee, as a representative of the Nixon administration, that it was constitutional. He also said it had stopped, anyway, so that a lawsuit over it should be dismissed. In 1972, as an associate justice, he joined in a 5-4 Supreme Court decision dismissing the suit. In the recent confirmation battle, attention focused on whether Rehnquist's failure to disqualify himself was unethical. It clearly was, but the more shocking lapse was his dishonest answer to a series of questions at his confirmation hearings. "When you were in the Justice Department," he was asked, "did you have knowledge about the military's domestic surveillance policy?" Only "in the course of preparing for the May Day demonstrations," Rehnquist answered. Those demonstrations were in 1971. Rehnquist's 1969 memorandum (which he also failed to mention in an opinion refusing to disqualify himself back in 1972) didn't surface until later. Added to his dissembling about other matters such as intimidation of black voters in Phoenix and his youthful views on *Brown v. Board of Education*, the picture of our new chief justice is of a man who doesn't value truth very highly. Welcome to the Rehnquist era.

□ FROM SHIPS TO CHIPS: In 1886 Congress passed a law forbidding foreign ships from carrying people between ports in the United States. Thanks to this ancient bit of protectionism, the *New York Times* reports, Seattle is losing the lucrative Alaska cruise business to Vancouver, British Columbia, because the foreign lines that run most of these cruises aren't allowed to take people from Seattle to Juneau or vice versa. Stupid? Sure. But also a timely illustration of the futility of protectionism. A trendier example of the same paradox is the recent trade agreement—heralded as a tremendous victory by the Reagan administration—limiting the import of Japanese computer chips. The wearily predictable sequence of results is (*a*) the cost of a basic 256-K RAM chip has quadrupled in the United States, and (*b*) desperate U.S. computer makers are talking about moving their production abroad. We'll probably be paying for this one over the next 100 years, too.

□ DIVINE JUSTICE: God has told the Rev. Pat Robertson to run for the Republican presidential nomination, provided that at least three million souls here on earth send him—Pat, that is—the same message. Among those who should be praying most fervently for Robertson to hear the call are Democrats. Pat Robertson will not be nominated. But he will scare a lot of moderate voters anyway, and whoever does get the nomination will have to pander to Robertson and his right-wing constituency in ways that are bound to be good for the opposition. Having suffered through Jesse Jackson in 1984, Democrats are entitled to see Robertson's candidacy as manna from heaven. But God helps those who help themselves. For moderate and liberal Democrats who wish to help Pat reach his magic three million, we offer this handy clip-'n'-mail coupon.

DEAR PAT,

___ YES! I urge you to run for the presidency of these United States.

God bless you.

Name _____

Address _____

_____

Mail to: Americans for Robertson
P.O. Box 37002
Washington, D.C. 20013

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□ THE DRUG-HYPE WATCH: With the final triumph of tax reform seemingly inevitable, the Notebook hereby retires its two-year-old "Tax Reform Watch." In its place, we will be noting the most opportunistic or absurd attempts to exploit the so-called drug crisis. Our first winner is Pierre S. du Pont IV, former governor of Delaware, who declared his candidacy for president September 16. The cornerstone of his announcement was a proposal for drug testing of all—yes, *all*—public high school students. Governor du Pont is a 1952 graduate of Phillips Exeter Academy.

□ IS THE GLASS HALF-EMPTY OR HALF-FULL?

SLOW GAIN IMPLIED BY 1.1% JULY RISE IN ECONOMIC INDEX

—*New York Times*, August 29

Economic Index Jumped 1.1% in July, Indicating Some Acceleration in Growth

—*Wall Street Journal*, August 29
(thanks to Bruce Bartlett, Washington, D.C.)

□ SAFE BETS:

Open Seats May Hold Key to Senate

—*National Journal*, September 6

Possibility exists that there may or may not be an arms pact

—*San Diego Union*, July 27

WHITE HOUSE WATCH

LOVEBOMBING

Grand Rapids, Michigan

The secret is out. The surest way for a politician to neutralize a hostile press corps is to embrace the very journalists responsible for the most stinging criticism. There's nothing so effective as a few yucks with the press. Lovebombing works.

Former President Gerald Ford was always on friendly terms with reporters, even when they were writing about his head-bumping routine upon entering helicopters or his pratfall on the ramp from Air Force One at Salzburg in 1975. But chumminess with the press took a quantum leap from September 17 to 19 when Ford hosted reporters, cartoonists, and comedians for a symposium on "Humor and the Presidency" at his presidential museum in Grand Rapids. The journalists and comics took their best shots at Ford—"Did you really put that ice cream cone on your forehead?" Pat Paulsen asked him—and he grinned and guffawed through it all. In the end, the press fell at Ford's feet. "Mr. President," said Mark Russell at the close of a two-hour gala, "we were only kidding."

THE HARDEST TO fall was Chevy Chase, who made his name by doing a caricature of a clumsy Ford on "Saturday Night Live." Chase had trouble getting the joke off in Ford's presence. Ford performed the joke better. He nearly knocked over the lectern at a press conference, and grinned about it. He bumped into Edward Bennett Williams when the Washington lawyer walked away from the podium after a speech. And he was quick to tell a luncheon audience what had happened offstage. "In case you missed it, I ran into a table of dishes and knocked it over," he said, all smiles.

Chase didn't know whether to apologize for his ridicule of Ford or repeat it. "I had second thoughts," he explained sheepishly about having made fun of Ford on TV. "I was young and hungry" at the time. Ford "happened to be hitting his head and tripping, and that's something I can do. . . . Time heals wounds. It's been a long time since we were in the heat of that." More awkward than Chase's apologies were his performances.

Twice, Ford rescued Chase as he was bombing on stage. "That's enough," Ford yelled out at the luncheon, rushing to the podium to put his arm around Chase. At the gala, Ford did a reprise. This gave Chase the opportunity for his only good line. "Thank you for having me here," he told Ford. "I'm kind of embarrassed, and I hope you'll pardon me." Ford, whose pardon of Richard Nixon may have cost him the 1976 presidential election, laughed heartily. Chase was wrong about one thing. He said it "took a great deal of courage for President Ford to invite a lot of us here." What it took wasn't courage but smarts.

The best political humor is often offensive and in bad taste, but as Berke Breathed, the cartoonist who draws *Bloom County*, complained, "It's virtually impossible to insult anyone anymore." Politicians and celebrities now know better than to be insulted. "As a satirist, I'm dismayed at President Ford's warmth for political cartoonists," Breathed said, half-seriously. Ford smiled. No matter how vicious he gets, the victim calls and asks for the original of the cartoon. In one strip, he questioned the manhood of singer Barry Manilow. "He asked for the original with a card that smelled faintly of lilacs." Reagan was worse. When he called, "my heart sank." When he praised Breathed for drawing a "flattering image" of Nancy Reagan, "my heart sank again." When Reagan asked for the original, "I looked for my Exacto knife to slit my throat."

Last summer Reagan invited 14 political cartoonists to lunch. "He lets us come to the White House, but I don't

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think he knows who we are," said Mike Peters of the *Dayton Daily News*. Paul Szep of the *Boston Globe* said his mother told a friend of his visit to the White House. The friend asked if Szep was with the government. "Oh, no," his mother said, "he's a cartoonist. He works against the government." Reagan's embrace of cartoonists does have its limits. When cut, he bleeds a little. Three prominent cartoonists weren't on the invitation list for the luncheon—Herblock of the *Washington Post*, Paul Conrad of the *Los Angeles Times*, and Garry Trudeau, who draws *Doonesbury*. All three are sharp critics of Reagan.

As you might guess, the two presidents who got the most grief were the ones who lacked a sense of humor. Neither Richard Nixon nor Jimmy Carter was adept at laughing it up with reporters. This made the press quite happy. "It's more fun to have guys in there who take themselves seriously," said Jeff MacNelly, the cartoonist of the *Chicago Tribune*. "That's why I had such a good time with Carter." He drew Carter as a man too small for the job, a tiny figure dwarfed by the furniture in the Oval Office. When MacNelly worked for the *Richmond News-Leader*, a conservative paper that attacked Carter relentlessly, he was invited to the White House. Carter told him: "You're not as bad as the editorials, but almost." MacNelly was nonplussed. Only later did it dawn on him that he should have responded: "You're not as bad as Warren Harding, but almost."

Liz Carpenter, the former press secretary to Lady Bird Johnson and an appointee in the Carter administration, was the lone participant at Ford's conference who could recall any Carter humor. And it wasn't the sort to soften press hearts. At a dinner for reporters just before he departed the White House, Carter rose and offered thanks. "I want to thank all of you who've made my job easier and more comfortable and more enjoyable," he said. "Rosalynn, thank you." When Carter was cut, he bled a lot.

Nixon did too, but he is credited with occasionally providing inadvertent humor. Maybe that helps to explain why he's been able to revive himself as a public figure and Carter hasn't. One story told in Grand Rapids had Nixon making a feeble attempt at male bonding with David Frost, who was interviewing Nixon for television. During a break, they wandered out to the veranda. "Well, David," Nixon is supposed to have said, "done any fornicating lately?" Gerald Warren, the deputy White House press secretary under Nixon, revealed that in China Nixon was asked what he thought of the Great Wall. "It's truly a great wall," he said. In Kansas City a policeman was badly injured while escorting Nixon's motorcade. "How do you like your job?" Nixon asked the prone cop. Noticing the festive crowds in Paris at the time of the funeral of French president Georges Pompidou, Nixon told reporters, "It's a great day for Paris." Quite an ad-libber, that Nixon.

FROM TIME to time, some Washington journalist has the gall to rebel against the charm offensive mounted by politicians. Tom Bethell of the *American Spectator*, for example, wrote a piece zinging Senator Alan Simpson of Wyoming. Bethell said Simpson had gained "strange new respect" in Washington by subtly moving away from his old conservative views. Simpson was aghast. Why, he wrote in response, Bethell had failed to interview him. No way would I want to do that, Bethell answered. Simpson would prove to be a charmer, and Bethell would wind up pulling his punches.

Well, I don't have Bethell's willpower. When I got a letter over Ford's signature inviting me to the humor conference, I was tempted. Later, when the Gerald Ford Foundation followed up with a letter asking me to be a participant, I agreed. I was the fourth or fifth to speak during a panel discussion. Ford was sitting in the front row, smiling benignly. He'd already thanked me for coming. And I found myself declaring how much I had enjoyed covering his presidency for the now-defunct *Washington Star*. It was *fun*. Ford never got testy about what you wrote, the way Carter did. But most self-respecting journalists don't like to admit in private, let alone in public, that they have had a good time covering a political figure. That's considered bad form. In my defense, let me repeat the circumstances. Ford was sitting a few feet in front of me, smiling. It seemed like the thing to say at the time.

FRED BARNES

Free the KGB 25.

EXPULSION FOLLIES

"This will have a crippling effect on the KGB. . . . It is like putting your hand in their heart and ripping it out."
—A White House spokesman on the expulsion of 25 Soviet U.N. employees from the United States.

ALTHOUGH THIS organ-ripping fantasy may soothe Reagan supporters, especially those apprehensive about a summit sellout, it unfortunately misses the reality of the Soviet intelligence apparatus in the United States.

There is an important distinction between case officers, who are always replaceable from the pool of available diplomats, and spies, who are not. The 25 expelled Soviets are KGB case officers, with diplomatic immunity, who service spy networks. Case officers do not themselves break into vaults and photocopy secret documents. They recruit spies, who have potential access to the secrets, to do it for them.

According to the CIA handbook, *Soviet Intelligence Operations*, the spies they recruit are almost always American nationals who either work for the military, government agencies, or defense contractors, or who have future prospects of such employment. Some recent examples of Soviet spies include Jerry Whitworth, a code clerk in the Navy; Edward Lee Howard, a CIA officer in the Soviet Bloc Divi-

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sion; Arthur Walker, a lieutenant commander in the Navy; James Wood, a counterintelligence officer in the Air Force; Richard Miller, a counterintelligence agent in the FBI; Ronald W. Pelton, an analyst in a supersecret compartment in the National Security Agency; and Colonel William H. Whelan, the senior intelligence officer for the Joint Chiefs of Staff. These Americans all delivered classified secrets to their Soviet case officers, who were diplomats.

The chief means for ferreting out Americans who spy for the Soviets is identifying and trailing the case officers, who operate out of the embassy or the Soviet mission. Eventually, directly or through intermediaries, they must contact their American sources. If 25 "senior" Soviet case officers in New York had been identified, as the White House claims, the FBI had a very definite advantage in the spy game. It had their photographs, addresses, work schedules, license plates, and modi operandi. With its surveillance teams and sophisticated electronic gadgetry and chemical tracing agents, the FBI is perfectly positioned to follow these known couriers to their sources. Even if the Soviet case officers were superbly trained at countersurveillance (e.g., ducking in and out of subway doors, as in *The French Connection*) and managed to elude their followers, they could be spotted again by other strategically placed "watchers."

This advantage would be thrown away by expelling these case officers. The KGB could either assign the task of servicing their American spies to Soviet or Eastern European diplomats who had not previously been co-opted for this purpose, or it could gradually bring in new case officers, who would replace personnel already here. In either case, the FBI would no longer know with any certainty whom to follow, trace, or bug.

Oddly enough, none of the putative American spies from whom the KGB case officers were getting secrets were arrested—or even mentioned—in this pre-summit drama. Since the 25 expelled KGB case officers had been positively identified, they were presumably followed for some time as they went on their appointed rounds. Is it to be inferred from this omission that the KGB agents lacked the competence to recruit any spies? Or that the FBI surveillance teams lacked the competence to trail these marked couriers to their sources?

IN ANY CASE, the Reagan administration managed to expel the 25 Soviet case officers without any questions being asked about the spies themselves. (Nor was much attention paid to Secretary General Javier Perez de Cuellar's assertion that because no evidence of espionage was furnished by the United States, the expulsion violated both the U.N. charter and the 1949 headquarters agreement.) The brilliantly orchestrated Reagan coup mimicked a similar symbolic expulsion last year by the Thatcher government of Soviet KGBers from London. It had actually begun six months ago (with a request that the Soviet Union reduce the size of its U.N. mission). The result was nothing more than a change in the KGB order of battle. To wit, known KGB case officers were replaced in New York with unknown ones, a move that if anything ripped the heart out of the FBI's counterintelligence capacity in New York.

EDWARD JAY EPSTEIN

Edward Jay Epstein is writing a book on international deception.

POSTCARD SOUTH AFRICA

CAMOUFLAGE APARTHEID

Cape Town

Conor: The University of Cape Town, the oldest in South Africa, has a splendid setting, on the lower slopes of Table Mountain, looking out over the city and the bay. It seems idyllic, in the sparkling sunshine of the early South African spring. But humanly, there is sometimes a chill in the air.

A neatly typed notice outside the elevator on our floor runs: "It appears that a student has been writing racist slogans in the lift in this building. If apprehended, this student will be referred without compunction to the University Court and legal action will be taken against him or her." Signed, John deGruchy, acting dean, faculty of social sciences and humanities. To which an unknown hand has added in ink, in black letters, the single word: HONKIES.

This is my fourth visit to South Africa. But this time I have with me my adopted son, Patrick, who is black, and this somehow changes the whole feel of the thing. Before I was looking on, a concerned outsider. Now it's distinctly closer to home. Apartheid becomes something that you can feel reaching out at you. It is in the nature of modern apartheid to camouflage itself from middle-class visitors, of whatever color. All the same, apartheid has its ways of making itself known to you, even when it's not supposed to be there.

Patrick: I arrived in South Africa, without really knowing what to expect. My initial reaction in the immigration hall of D. F. Malan Airport was one of surprise. Not because I was treated as a "second-class citizen," as I think I had expected, but because no action whatsoever was taken toward me, the only "non-white" in the airport apart from employees.

On our first full day in Cape Town, after sleeping off the effects of the long journey from London, I left our comfortable hotel to wander about the center of the prosperous suburb Newlands. As I walked into Newlands' main mall, I thought to myself, one of two things will happen. Either I will be physically ejected from "white" shops or, as in the airport, no notice will be taken.

What actually happened was something in between. When I walked into my first white-area shop, I was immediately treated to cold, unwelcoming suspicious stares. My

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first impulse was to leave. But rather than be defeated so easily, I approached one of the assistants and spoke. At this point, the stares softened, and he became one of the most helpful men I have ever met.

This pattern repeated itself several times. It was an American woman who explained it to me. She said: "When they know you're a foreigner, you're no longer a threat."

Conor: "Petty apartheid" is supposed to be gone. What are really gone are those aspects of old-style apartheid that were most likely to impinge on middle-class foreigners. In relation to the working-class blacks of South Africa, apartheid grinds on relentlessly today, as petty and pedantic, and at the same time as gross and overwhelming, as ever it was. A small item recently on an inside page of the *Cape Times* gives you a whiff of the apartheid that is supposed to be gone: "WOMEN FINED FOR SLEEPING WITH HUSBANDS: Six women from Mfuleni township near Stellenbosch who pleaded guilty were convicted of contravening the Black Communities' Development Act number four of 1984, in the Kuils River Magistrate's Court yesterday. They were found sleeping with their husbands, common-law or otherwise, in a pre-dawn raid on the township's 'single quarters.' The women were fined between 30 and 50 rands each."

WE HAD LUNCH one day in the garden of a white friend, Peter, in a Cape Town suburb. Our fellow guest was a psychologist attached to the university. The psychologist, who has an Afrikaans name, was preoccupied by a report he had to deliver to a court of law that afternoon. The report was an effort to demonstrate "mitigating circumstances" that might save two convicted murderers from the death penalty.

The murdered man was one of the black "community counselors" who are denounced by black radicals (the "comrades") as guilty of collaboration with the apartheid regime. The counselor's house had been burned down while he was away, and he had come back in the hope of salvaging some of his belongings. The two men were lying in wait, and when they saw him, they gathered a crowd to attack him. They smashed his skull in with a rock, half-decapitated him, then "necklaced" him with a gasoline-filled tire and set fire to him.

The substance of the psychologist's report appeared to be that the whole apartheid system should be considered in mitigation of such a crime. I didn't think that this plea was likely to cut much ice with a South African court, and neither did the psychologist. Privately, his opinion is that if anyone deserved to hang those two comrades did, but that nobody should be hanged.

Yet the connection between apartheid and "the necklace" is there. It's not that apartheid "drives" people to commit such crimes. That's a sentimental—or pseudo-sentimental—way of putting it. It's that apartheid creates conditions in which terrorists can flourish, with some perceived legitimacy.

Our lunchtime conversation under a palm tree in the garden was interrupted . . .

Patrick: A ragged black man with a tattooed chest came walking down the street outside and saw us in the garden. He shouted something incomprehensible over the wall, opened the gate, and came in. Peter, our host, said: "Oh God, not him again."

The man walked toward us with an unlit cigarette, demanding a light, while being told to leave. Peter held out his lighter to him. The man stopped, looked at him, and demanded, "Why you offer me a light like that? This is not Zimbabwe. This is South Africa."

The man asked for money. Peter said no, but offered to give him the address of SHAWCO, the Student Health and Welfare Committee. The man said, "Anything you can give me I will be appreciative of. I have no money, no food, no blankets." Peter explained that SHAWCO would meet his needs. He found the address in the phone book. As Peter wrote down the address, the man looked over his shoulder. He said: "Where are you sending me? You are not sending me to P. W. [President P. W. Botha]?" Everyone laughed.

Peter gave him the address. He still refused to go, asking, "How can I go there with no transport?"

It was only a present of food and a little pressure that got him to leave. With Peter gently half pushing, half pulling him, he went out the gate thanking us all as he went. Peter said: "That's where sanctions get you. More and more beggars. If you give one money, he comes back with his friends."

Conor: Peter and his wife seem to feel we might be shocked by their attitude. Actually, Patrick told me that he would have been a lot less patient with the man than Peter was. In any case, we felt that the man would be back.

I WOULDN'T LIKE anyone to infer from any of the above that we are sorry we came or that we regret breaking the "academic boycott" that the anti-apartheid movements in Britain and Ireland have been trying to apply to South African universities—even to those like Cape Town that reject apartheid. The chairman of the Irish anti-apartheid movement described my decision to teach for some weeks at Cape Town as "an act of betrayal."

The reductio ad absurdum of the intellectual boycotting of South African schools and scholars has been attained in Paris. A conference of poststructuralists and whatnot has convened there to discuss the work of the distinguished South African novelist and academic J. M. Coetzee, author of *The Life and Death of Michael K.* and other works. The organizers of the conference have decided not to invite the author to the discussion of his work on the grounds that he works in a South African university.

CONOR CRUISE O'BRIEN AND PATRICK O'BRIEN

Conor Cruise O'Brien is the author most recently of *The Siege: An Outsider Looks at Zionism* (Simon and Schuster). Patrick O'Brien is a free-lance writer. © 1986 Conor Cruise O'Brien.

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Through the INF swamp.

A Geneva Guide

DURING THE OVERHEATED days when the nuclear debate was on every tongue and every screen, when it was argued that if the nuclear issue was not solved by Wednesday the world was lost, there were two concepts—clichés actually—constantly in the air. The first was "seriousness." When the Reagan administration put forward a proposal that the Soviets rejected, critics would say the proposal was not serious. Indeed, it was proof that we did not want arms control. This charge was laid at the administration's feet when it first proposed 50 percent reductions in nuclear arsenals. More radical than even a freeze, it was nevertheless clearly a sign of "lack of seriousness." When after some years, Gorbachev proposed a similar cut, the American proposal achieved, quite suddenly, seriousness.

Similarly the "zero option," the administration offer on intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) in Europe. Simple: We place no missiles, Pershing or cruise, in Europe. You take your SS-20s out. Both sides have zero. An eminently reasonable proposal, radical but quite desirable. But "unserious" said the critics. Why? Because the Soviets rejected it. So much so that when NATO followed through with its decision to deploy, the Soviets walked out of the talks in Geneva.

The zero option was one of the cleverest and boldest arms control proposals ever put forward. Under growing pressure from the European peace movement, the Reagan administration demonstrated the defensive and deterrent nature of the NATO deployment. In this sense alone, the zero option was a great success. It helped Western European governments in Britain, Germany, Italy, Belgium, and Holland beat back powerful anti-nuclear movements.

Part of the cleverness in the zero option idea was its lack of symmetry. When first proposed, the Soviets had already deployed large numbers of SS-20s and the United States had deployed none. Thus, the United States was offering to trade future for current deployment. And since it seemed likely, or at least possible, at the time that the European publics would unilaterally prevent the deployment of the U.S. missiles, the Soviets refused to bargain, and broke off talks in 1983. The Soviets gambled and lost. The deployments went ahead and the Soviets ultimately returned to the table at Geneva.

The other very current idea was the "bargaining chip," derisively used by opponents in the context of the MX, SDI, and Euromissiles. Clearly not everything called a bargaining chip will be bargained away. The president (who, to be fair, has never held SDI to be a bargaining chip; others have) has made it clear again in his U.N. speech that he will not give up his Star Wars dream. And though MX is in theory a bargaining chip, that is true only if the Soviets are prepared to give up their heavy missiles in return. They are not. Hence the skepticism that bargaining chips are anything more than sops thrown by nuclear builders to arms controllers.

Which makes the recent developments at the Geneva talks on Euromissiles so interesting. Since the Soviets returned to the table, the zero option has been the basis for discussion. It is now "serious." And the Pershings and cruises, put in place to force the Soviets to withdraw their SS-20s, are having that effect. The United States is on the verge of bargaining these chips away.

Both sides are now making noises that an INF agreement is within reach and might pave the way for a summit. (On September 19, Gorbachev, who had been making a ban on Star Wars a condition for a summit, indicated that a test ban and an INF agreement would be enough. A test ban agreement is not in the cards and Gorbachev knows it. But the recent Stockholm agreement on preventing accidental war might, with an INF deal, provide the cover he needs.) Nevertheless, a review of the bidding shows how extraordinarily difficult it is to achieve any sort of arms control agreement. On the face of it, the INF issue seems a rather easy problem. These are missiles that are not central to the strategic balance, that are not directly in defense of the superpowers' homeland, and that only recently have been introduced. It would seem to be the simplest of all the weapons systems to reduce. And in fact it is. It is also exceedingly difficult.

The American proposal has always had the virtue of simplicity. First it offered the Soviets a pure zero option. Later it was modified to say: we will accept any level of equality, from 572 warheads each (the projected NATO deployment) down to zero.

The Soviets seem to have accepted the principle, but attached certain conditions. They first demanded the inclusion of British and French nuclear systems. The Soviets have a habit of including British and French systems in their initial negotiating positions and later dropping them. This time they demanded that the British and French systems be counted on the U.S. side. Then, in a "concession" earlier this year, they demanded that these systems merely be frozen at current levels. Freezing, however, is worse than counting. If you count them, you end up with a smaller U.S. than Soviet deployment. That leads to an imbalance. But if you freeze them, you are condemning France and Britain, now bringing on board sophisticated new submarines, to rapid nuclear obsolescence. The idea was not only bad, it was unacceptable to the British and the French, and thus to the United States.

IT IS SIX months later, and the Soviets have made their latest proposal on INF. They suggest reaching an "interim" agreement to be signed now, with negotiations subsequently to begin on a "final" agreement. And for now, the Soviets are willing to table discussion of the French and the British systems until a final agreement. (At which time, though, they still demand a British and French freeze and an end to strategic cooperation between the United States and Britain, meaning that the United States may not sell Britain Trident submarines.)

That is the good news. There is much bad news. First, Asia. The Soviets have not only 270 SS-20s in Europe, but also 171 in Asia pointed primarily at China and Japan. The

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most the Soviets have offered for Asia is a freeze. At 513 warheads, that is not much of an offer.

Earlier this year, the United States floated a compromise on the Asian SS-20s. The State Department sold the president on the following idea: zero for both sides in Europe, and in Asia a 50 percent cut in SS-20s, with the missiles to be restricted to a "reservation" at some point equidistant between Europe and Asia. It was a harebrained scheme to begin with, and before being presented to the Soviets was floated by the allies. The Japanese, I am told, "went nuts." Japan, disarmed and protected only by the American nuclear umbrella, recoiled at the notion that, in order to rid Europe of INF missiles, it should be left to face alone a huge force of unopposed (by NATO) and American-sanctioned SS-20s.

THE ADMINISTRATION modified its position. The interim agreement it proposed just this week at Geneva proposes "global equality." Two hundred warheads on each side. A hundred each in Europe. A hundred Soviet warheads in Asia. And a hundred counterbalancing American warheads based in the United States.

There is something mildly comical about this proposal. One hundred each in Europe sounds fine. But a hundred intermediate-range American warheads based in the United States would be poised to kill a lot of fish in the mid-Pacific. The "global equality" here is transparently false.

So why did Reagan make the offer? Because the Japanese and even the toughest Americans (by and large) can live with it. The Japanese, because Europe is not made INF-free and they are not standing alone. And the hawks, because even a poor INF agreement is tolerable if it takes pressure off the administration for a poor agreement in far more crucial areas: START and Star Wars. The bad is enemy of the worst. It is not clear yet, however, whether the level of asymmetry conceded in the American proposal will be enough to satisfy the Soviets.

Even if it is, there are other obstacles besides Asia. A second is short-range systems. These are the Soviet SS-21s, -22s, and -23s and American Pershing Is and Lance missiles. They have a range less than a Pershing II or an SS-20. But they could be upgraded or moved to forward positions to substitute for INF missiles. In fact, the Soviets moved some short-range missiles into Czechoslovakia and East Germany to counter the NATO deployment of Pershings in early 1984 and since. The United States has proposed a freeze in short-range systems. The latest Soviet proposal makes no mention of them.

Then there is the question of verification. A pure zero option is easy to verify, since the infrastructure for building the weapons would be destroyed. Near zero is difficult. Since the SS-20s are mobile and thus very concealable, how do you verify them? You need on-site inspection at the manufacture and assembly facilities and also a monitoring of those areas not designated for SS-20 deployment. The Soviets are not likely to agree to such a high level of scrutiny. And, if the just-concluded Stockholm agreement is a guide, we will likely acquiesce to much less. The Stockholm "breakthrough" on on-site inspection establishes the principle that inspected states shall control the means of inspection. The United States had demanded overflights by neutral (e.g., Swiss or Swedish) planes. It settled for Soviet planes with Soviet pilots. The fox does not guard the sheep; he merely shepherds the shepherds around.

And more troubles. The Soviets insist that the hundred NATO missiles be cruise and not Pershing missiles. The United States has resisted allowing the Soviets to decide the mix. The Pershings are preferable because they are already deployed and because cruise missiles are easier to defend against than ballistic missiles. It is also politically important for the United States to decide how to spread the deployment among various NATO countries.

Finally, the fishhook. A fishhook is something you know the other side cannot swallow. You include it in a proposal and decide later whether to withdraw it, in order to postpone deciding whether you really want a deal or just good p.r. The latest Soviet proposal makes the "interim" agreement time-limited. Now, an INF agreement with no time limit is already a huge risk for the West, because, as a practical matter, the West is incapable of matching a Soviet breakout. Say that both sides cut INF systems to a token hundred warheads, and in a few years' time the Soviets decide it suits them to return missiles to Europe. They can do it rather easily. It is technically easy because their systems are mobile and could be trucked in from Asia in a matter of days. And it is politically easy because no anti-nuclear demonstrators in Eastern Europe or the Soviet Union will greet them as they rumble down the Urals. Imagine NATO governments once again reintroducing Euromissiles. One can't. There is no European government that would be reckless enough to risk replaying the politically dangerous struggle that occurred with the original introduction of these missiles in the early 1980s.

But at least under an unlimited agreement, such a scenario would require a gross and obvious (even to the European left) Soviet violation. Under the new Soviet proposal of a time limit, such a scenario is sanctioned by the West. If, say, the treaty ran for five years, after that time, the Soviets could reintroduce their missiles instantly, without opposition and, almost certainly, without a Western counterdeployment. The administration is known to be hungry for a summit and for some agreement to mollify Gorbachev. But any administration that swallows this particular fishhook deserves burial at sea.

ASSUME WE CAN verify, or live with, an only marginally verifiable treaty. Assume no time limit. Assume inclusion of Asia and global limits. Assume a freeze on short-range systems. Is an INF agreement a good idea?

What is the inherent value of this bargaining chip? After all, the emplacement of Euromissiles was perhaps the greatest, and most neglected, foreign policy achievement of this administration. It decisively defeated the pacifist and peace movements, proved that allied governments could act together, and faced down Soviet efforts to regulate by proxy NATO nuclear deployments. Nevertheless,

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if a withdrawal of NATO missiles leads to a withdrawal of Soviet missiles, only the score is changed, proportionately for both sides. The victory is hardly undone.

But there are other considerations. The real problem in Europe is not the imbalance of nuclear forces, but of conventional forces. And the purpose of our Euromissiles is only partially to offset SS-20s. More importantly they strengthen what is called extended deterrence, the notion that we will defend the Europeans from a *conventional* attack with our nuclear arsenal. This guarantee is difficult to credit if it relies on the use of strategic weapons launched from the United States in response to such an attack. The existence of intermediate nuclear weapons in Europe makes the guarantee less implausible (if still not quite believable—nothing can achieve that). This is what is called "coupling." The fate of the United States becomes tied to that of Europe: that is the ultimate purpose of these missiles.

And it is why the European governments have reacted with some nervousness (and irony, considering how they posture as peace-seekers prodding the United States to reasonableness vis-á-vis the Soviets) at the approach of a near zero-zero deal. Their worry is decoupling.

And yet for almost 20 years extended deterrence held while the Soviets maintained an unopposed intermediate range force in Europe. Through the '60s and '70s the Soviets had SS-4s (the weapon that Khrushchev tried to sneak into Cuba) and SS-5s pointing at Europe. What sparked European fears, and a crisis of confidence in the American guarantee, was the replacement of the SS-4s and -5s by vastly more threatening SS-20s. Even the new American Pershing IIs and cruise missiles are militarily inferior to the MIRVed, mobile, and accurate SS-20s. We can live with an even swap, particularly if a token "extended deterrence" force of a hundred remains.

It is a deal not without cost. But then a deal without costs is either a swindle or a sham. The Soviets are not easily swindled. And the costs are tolerable—if we don't swallow the fishhooks.

CHARLES KRAUTHAMMER

The Socialist is on top.

FRENCHMEN IN BED

Paris

Imagine Ronald Reagan trying to govern with a Cabinet chosen and presided over by George McGovern, and you have an idea of the current bizarre political situation in France. Since the legislative elections of March 16, Socialist President François Mitterrand has had to surrender most of his executive authority to a conservative prime minister, Jacques Chirac. Yet Mitterrand is far from a figurehead, and neither man can afford to appear the instigator of a break—which might well lead to a constitutional crisis. Thus the two have been condemned to execute a convoluted dance of cooperation that the French press has labeled "cohabitation." As part of the ritual, nearly all disagreements must be expressed in carefully phrased euphemisms and subtly barbed understatements that often recall nothing so much as the court life of the ancien régime. Cohabitation has also distracted attention from a singular ideological shift. Today it is conservative neo-Gaullists who push for changes in French society, while the Socialists appear more and more as the defenders of the status quo.

COHABITATION came about because of a strange quirk in the short, seemingly straightforward document that France adopted as its constitution in 1958. Largely conceived by Charles de Gaulle, the constitution was designed to end the Fourth Republic's revolving-door succession of unstable coalitions by putting most power firmly in the grip of one man (to start with, of course, de Gaulle himself). Yet de Gaulle's right-hand man, Michel Debré, who actually drafted the document, insisted on preserving the form of a parliamentary system. In a key clause, much discussed in Paris lately, he stated categorically that "the prime minister directs the actions of the government." Both men expected that in practice the prime minister would nonetheless act as the president's deputy, freeing him from the more mundane (or as de Gaulle saw it, the more corrupt) aspects of parliamentary politics to focus on broad questions of national interest. But for this arrangement to work, the two would have to belong to the same political party.

For 27 years this was the case, despite the fact that presidential and parliamentary elections did not always coincide. On the negative side, the existence of a so-called "dual executive" often led to massive and legendary squabbling between presidential and prime ministerial staffs. And prime ministers who displayed too much independence inevitably found themselves soon out of office (this was the case with Jacques Chirac himself in 1976). But as long as the president kept his authority over the prime minister, he had more decision-making power than any other Western democratic leader, including the president of the United States.

On March 16 this age of French politics came to a jarring end when the right-wing opposition wrested control of Parliament from the Socialists. Mitterrand, whose term still had two years to run, was thus forced to name Chirac prime minister, with the power to choose a Cabinet and all the top officials in the French government. The only exception came when the president, described in the constitution as "the guarantor of national independence," insisted on retaining some control over foreign affairs. Thus a noncontroversial career diplomat became foreign minister, rather than one of Chirac's prominent right-wing allies. But elsewhere it was clear that the new government would now report to the prime minister's Matignon Palace, and not

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the presidential Elysée. In the Ministry of Agriculture, for instance, Socialist civil servants who had spent five years battling the powerful conservative farmers' union found themselves clearing out their desks for a new minister—the union's president. The finance ministry was pointedly renamed the "Ministry of Finance and Privatization." An old Gaullist warhorse, Charles Pasqua, took over the Ministry of the Interior with the intention of "unleashing" the police.

Cohabitation, now six months old, has added to the already strong theatrical quality of French politics. For example, in June both Mitterrand and Chirac insisted on attending the European summit at the Hague, and then sat through an entire formal lunch without exchanging a word. A month later, a potentially serious disagreement also took on the aspect of high melodrama. Chirac, who wanted to denationalize 65 banks, insurance companies, and corporations (most of which were first nationalized only five years ago by the Socialists), feared to test his three-seat parliamentary majority on such a sensitive issue. Therefore, resorting to a convenient constitutional shortcut, he tried to implement the plan by decree. But Mitterrand, whose consent was necessary for this maneuver, refused to provide it—and in the most ostentatious way possible. On July 14, Bastille Day, as the French army was parading its newest hardware down the Champs-Elysée, the president declared that Chirac's measure gave insufficient protection to the denationalized firms against foreign takeover (despite the fact that in most cases the decree limited foreign ownership to just 15 percent). In "good conscience," and for the sake of the "national interest," he could not sign.

For several days, cohabitation seemed on the point of collapse, but finally Chirac backed down. Although there was some question about Mitterrand's legal right to withhold his signature, the prime minister decided to avoid a showdown and submitted the bill to Parliament after all. He also staged a petulant press conference at which he accused the president of "opposing the will of a majority of the French people." His marriage of convenience with Mitterrand was now "scarred," he declared. A few weeks later, the denationalization bill passed without incident.

Chirac was particularly anxious to avoid a serious confrontation because of the presidential election of 1988, in which both he and Mitterrand hope to run, and in which Chirac faces considerable competition on the right. The

Waking Up To Terror

In the past two weeks, thanks to the horrific bombing campaign that has killed ten and wounded over 200, the usual confused routine of "cohabitation" has given way to a sober show of hard-line unity. President Mitterrand has called for a "merciless" response to the attacks, and Prime Minister Chirac has demanded "crushing and unflinching" retaliation. However, terrorism has proved to be a divisive question in French politics before, and may well be again.

Several leaders of the right made terrorism an issue in parliamentary elections last March by accusing the Socialists of being "soft" on the subject. (Ironically, the most vociferous of them, Charles Pasqua, is now minister of the interior, and thus in charge of French counterterrorism.) The charge had some validity. Two members of the Abu Nidal organization had recently been released from French prisons after serving only half of their 15-year murder sentences. Two years ago, in an attempt to free a French diplomat held hostage in Lebanon, Mitterrand's government was willing to negotiate the release of the Lebanese terrorists whose freedom is now being demanded by the Paris bomb-throwers. (The deal collapsed at the last minute.)

Yet if the Socialists occasionally headed in the direction of accommodation with terrorism, they were only following a path blazed by their conservative predecessors. Indeed, the single most disgraceful case of this sort occurred under Giscard d'Estaing in 1977 when Abu Daud, the mastermind of the PLO's 1972 Munich Olympics massacre, was arrested, held for five days, and then put on a plane for Algeria, causing an international uproar. In the 1970s France also served as a haven for ETA Basque terrorists fighting against Spain. France often refused to act on Spanish requests to pursue or extradite ETA members.

It was the Socialists who started to change French policy toward terrorism, a trend that has continued since the March elections. Thus after the massacre of American and French soldiers in Lebanon in October 1983, the French retaliated with military strikes in the Bekaa. Some French troops are still in Lebanon today, despite the threats to seven French hostages there. And this summer, several principal leaders of the ETA were unceremoniously dumped across the border into the hands of the Spanish police.

However, the tragic fact is that even this new hard-line policy is unlikely to prevent further attacks in France. In the past, European governments have fought most effectively against homegrown terrorist groups that depend on a small and recognizable group of sympathizers for support, such as the right-wing OAS in France in the 1960s, and more recently the Red Brigade in Italy and the Red Army Faction in West Germany. Such groups can be tracked, and even infiltrated.

With terrorists who have a greater degree of popular support, such as the IRA or the ETA, the process is already much more difficult. And in the case of terrorists who strike from abroad and then quickly disappear, as has been the case in Paris this September, it can be almost impossible. Barring an unexpected stroke of luck, Jacques Chirac will have to hope that the current terrorist offensive has run its course. If not, as the day-to-day head of the French government he will be held increasingly responsible for failing to stop further attacks. For his political opponents, including the racist National Front, the temptation to capitalize on the issue will become irresistible.

D.A.B.

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polls continue to show that the French prefer cohabitation to its uncertain alternatives, and will take electoral revenge on whomever they believe has sabotaged the tenuous arrangement. Chirac must be especially careful, for the same polls show that his popularity has declined rapidly since taking office. Mitterrand, meanwhile, having shed the burden of power, is more popular than at any time since the start of his presidency, with a phenomenal 68 percent rating.

MITTERRAND'S POPULARITY ought to be good news for the Socialists, but in fact, it may only keep the party from facing its most pressing problems. Since 1978 the share of the total electorate voting for the combined left has fallen steadily from 40 percent to just 33 percent, due mostly to the precipitous and terminal decline of France's Moscow-oriented Communist Party (many of whose voters either abstain or turn to the neo-fascist National Front). To win elections, the Socialists must count on massive abstention by the right, as happened in 1981 out of widespread disgust with President Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. Otherwise, they must draw more votes from the Communists and the center or be condemned to permanent minority status.

However, the party is unlikely to recover much ground from anyone as long as its own identity remains in question. In 1981, after Mitterrand's electoral triumph, the Socialists launched a classic program of nationalization, reflation, and wide-ranging reform that was quickly smashed to bits by the recession. By 1983 they had retrenched into a full-fledged program of austerity that Mitterrand characterized as a "parenthesis" in the progress of socialism, but that seemed a very open-ended parenthesis to everyone concerned. Today the original program is no longer regarded as viable, given the precarious state of the economy. But if the Socialists were returned to power tomorrow, it is not at all clear what they would try to do in its place. This summer, at the party's convention, former Prime Minister Laurent Fabius spoke for more than half an hour, and mentioned the word "socialism" exactly once. And Jean-Pierre Chevènement, once the most prominent New Left figure in the party, spoke not of the class struggle, but of the virtues of Republicanism.

Meanwhile, much to the Socialists' dismay, the ideological initiative in France has been squarely seized by the right, and it is in this sense that cohabitation marks a real turning point. Prime Minister Chirac, strongly influenced by Reaganism and Thatcherism, has endorsed an ambitious free market program, centered on denationalization, that may eventually challenge not only the reforms put in place by the Socialists, but 300 years of aggressive state intervention in the French economy. Chirac put matters quite clearly in his July 16 press conference: "State control and bureaucracy belong to the past. The future belongs to free and independent private enterprise."

Still, with the newly passed denationalization bill, the government has already begun to privatize most of the concerns brought under state control by the Socialists, and it has plans for going much further, despite some complaints from within its own ranks that it is not moving fast enough. For example, after a bruising parliamentary battle, Culture and Communications Minister François Léotard has finally succeeded in passing a bill that will privatize TF1, one of the three state-owned television networks. Like many of the right's projects, this is a step that Chirac himself would never have conceived of 20 years ago, when serving his political apprenticeship to the more traditional Gaullist President Georges Pompidou. State control (and abuse) of television has long been sacrosanct in French politics. Now it is Chirac who plays the radical, while a Socialist leader, François Mitterrand, casts himself as the defender of the status quo, the implicit heir to Colbert, Napoleon, and de Gaulle.

It is easy to call into question the quality of Chirac's "new ideas." Denationalization has not proved particularly successful for Margaret Thatcher, and "Privatize!" is certainly not a very inspiring battle cry. It is also doubtful whether Chirac's attempt to propagate an American-style entrepreneurial spirit will prove successful in a country where the state remains such a powerful presence, and where many of the most ambitious university students still choose public service over the lures of big business. On this score, it is significant that one of the new government's first moves was to restrict entry into the elite public service school, the ENA, because the alumni feared it was becoming less exclusive. Chirac and many of his closest allies are alumni themselves, and as a group they are bound to maintain the prestige of elite public service, regardless of their professed ideology.

STILL, THE FACT remains that for better or worse an ideology of denationalization and private enterprise (what the French call *libéralisme*) occupies the center stage in French politics for the moment. Moreover, Chirac is also grooming a new generation of *libéraux* to carry on the struggle in the 1990s, notably Léotard and Industry Minister Alain Madelin. In Socialist circles, it often seems that the less said about the succession to Mitterrand, the better.

It is a sign of the times in the West that even in a country with such a strong left-wing tradition as France, left-wing ideas are in such eclipse. This eclipse is no news to French intellectuals. But with cohabitation and the end of the Socialist experiment, it has become fully apparent in political life as well. It is of course entirely possible that through good luck and the blundering of their opponents, the French Socialists may yet stave off electoral purgatory for some time to come. But like the Democrats in the United States, they have cast off one political identity, and have not yet found another. Until they do, they will be doing little more than struggling to preserve a tradition that they once hoped to supersede, and engaging in highly entertaining but ultimately fruitless political theater.

DAVID A. BELL

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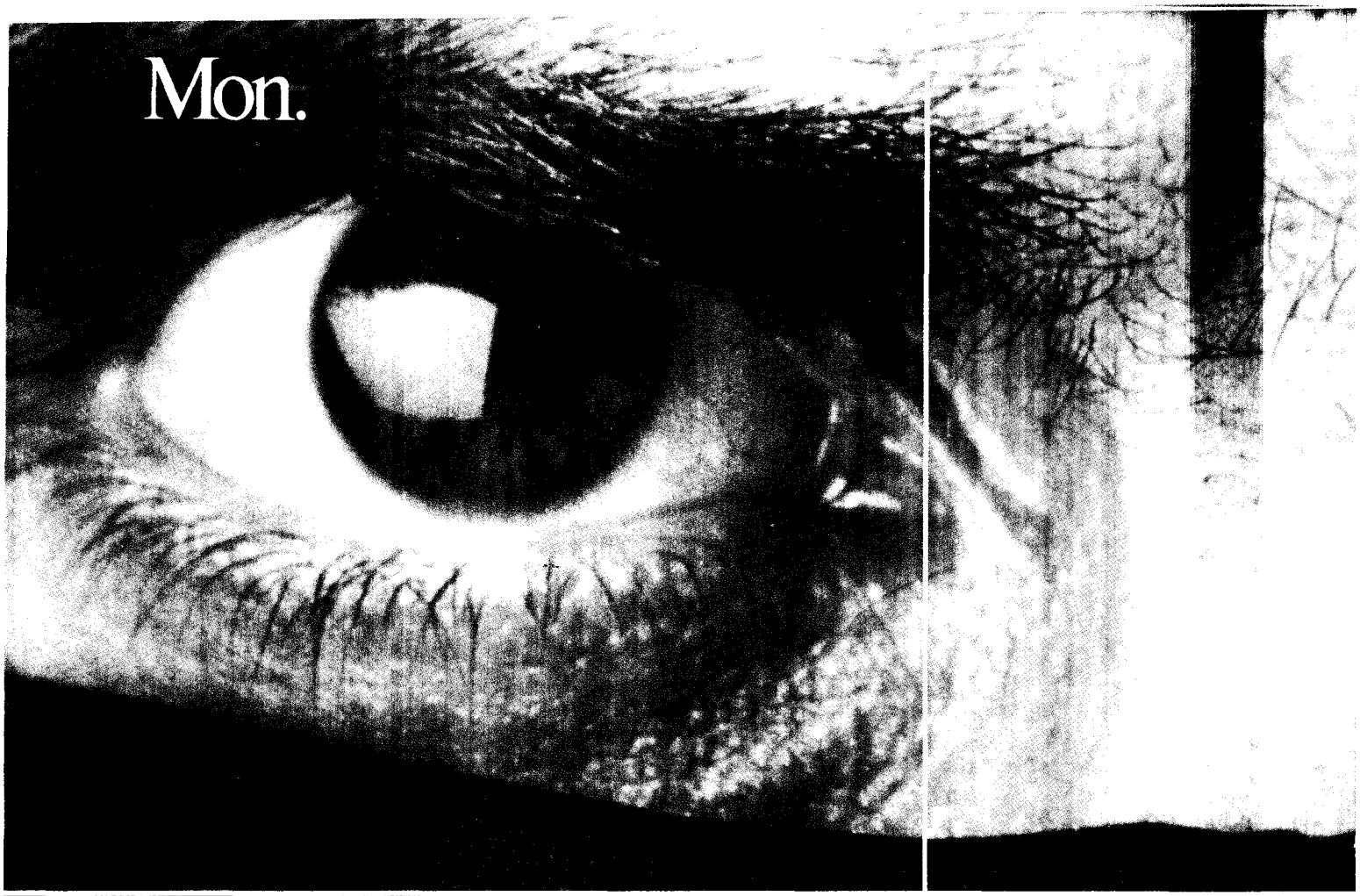

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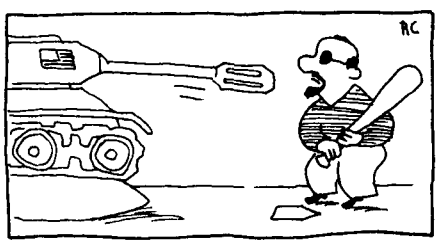
Briefing

What a Crazy Town I

Speaker of the House Thomas P. ("Tip") O'Neill was taken aback the other morning when a chatty four-page letter from the President of the United States, Ronald W. Reagan, landed on his desk. The President urged Mr. O'Neill to join him in a crusade to "exterminate the ultra-liberal vermin who infest Congress." The missive asked for a "contribution" of $25, $50, or $500. According to a top aide, who requested anonymity, the Speaker fired back "a handwritten" note, the contents of which he refused to divulge. But top White House aides, who have "seen" the letter, describe its tone as "cordial," and confide that Mr. Reagan is "contemplating an appropriate response."

Of Softball and Life

The Eagle Forum, a conservative group, always gets excited when it clashes with left-of-center rivals from the Spartacist League in the spir-



ited war zone of Washington softball. In their first pitched battle earlier this summer, the Eagle Forum Eagles decimated the Sparks 9-2. As one bearded combatant from the losing squadron put it, "Maybe this shows that Lenin and line drives just don't mix."

Informal Pigs

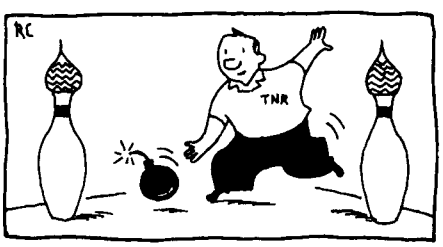
The National Pork Producers Council is not an organization famous for its informality. But the group will "loosen up a little" bit, at its upcoming hog roast, according to executive director Wade D. Buford. This year's festivities will be spiced with an "outside of the Beltway" flavor, Mr. Buford said. Scheduled events include a 10-kilometer hog race, a piglet rodeo, and a watermelon seed-spitting contest. "This town is ready for something like this," Mr. Buford chortled.

What a Crazy Town II

September is not usually the cruelest month, at least on the Capital Beltway, the eight-lane highway that forms a ring around this town. So Norman J. Ornstein, a political scientist and pre-eminent student of Capitol Hill, was chagrined the other day when a Virginia State Highway Patrolman nabbed him for driving in the High Occupancy Vehicle Lane (HOV). The lane is the special preserve of cars carrying three or more briefcase-toting bureaucrats. "HOV is a good institution which really works well," Ornstein observed. "I just had no idea it was rush hour. Next time I'll bring two friends—a Democrat and a Republican."

Rethinking Liberalism

Destroying the Soviet Union used to be an unpopular cause in this town, but the tide may be turning. Even the liberal New Republic has taken up the call. The magazine's lead editorial this week urges surgical nuclear strikes on key Soviet cities "as an expression of affirmative government."



Borin' Beaver
James Lax Clarity

Working Profile:
A Savvy

By PILL DAILY
Special to the Washington Squawk

WASHINGTON, Sept. 14 — B. Barton Blackball strolled into the conference room of the House Ways and Means Committee the other day carrying two shopping bags full of Krugerrands. Two hours later, he emerged with only a grin. The committee, in an unexpected 11th-hour maneuver, had unanimously restored tax breaks that will save Mr. Blackball's client, the Thalidomide Manufacturers of North America, $28 million over the next three years. Washington insiders point to the incident as typical. Mr. Blackball, they agree, is remarkably effective at getting his views heard above the din of this town's legion of lobbying titans.

"There's no special trick to it," Mr. Blackball said the other day as air raid sirens sounded outside his office. "You just have to convince them that your client has legitimate concerns which ought to be their concerns, too."

In a town filled with cautious team players, Blackball is a one-man juggernaut. An unorthodox political operative, he recently escaped from the minimum-security penitentiary in Danbury, Connecticut. But his criminal record hasn't curtailed the queue of customers outside his firm's Alexandria headquarters.

He came to Washington at age 20 with only a cardboard suitcase and a crowbar to his name. Hungry for rough-and-tumble politics, he took a job as

Not Your

Special to the Washington Squawk

WASHINGTON, Sept. 14 — "Every third person you meet on the street in Washington uses my pay phone," says Saul Average, a retired lawyer, as he leans back on the park bench next to one of the most popular pay phones in the Nation's Capital.

In a town where the telephone looms larger than the Washington monument, Mr. Aver[illegible]'s pay phone stands out. It

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B. Barton Blackball

Lobbyist With a Passion for Cash

a messenger for the House Ethics Committee. He quickly parlayed the connections he had made in the corridors of power into one of this town's most sought-after Rolodexes. After five long weeks on the job, he decided to strike out on his own. His own lobbying firm, Blackball Associates, Ltd., was an overnight success.

Unfortunate Incident

In his salad days Mr. Blackball was known as a demanding taskmaster. When one of his several young assistants forgot to refill the soda machine during an especially trying all-night work session, he was taken outside and pistol-whipped. "I've mellowed since then," Mr. Blackball said.

Even though he now labors in the private sector, Mr. Blackball keeps his finger in the legislative-process pie by occasionally writing legislation for friends in Congress.

"It saves everyone a lot of time. Sure, I may stick in a few loopholes that benefit my clients," Mr. Blackball said. "But I take special care not to violate the sacred trust that my public role requires of me."

The unfortunate incident that resulted in Mr. Blackball's conviction on 96 counts of extortion and racketeering in no way diminished his zest for exploring the limits of the law. "The jail thing set me back a few years," Mr. Blackball admitted the other day. "But

I think this town understands."

Some critics assert that legislation is needed to curb the growth of "influence-peddlers" in this town. Washington representatives like Mr. Blackball, they claim, may attempt to "lobby" public officials with hefty campaign contributions.

He Is Generally Impressed

But Norman J. Ornstein, an expert on the legislative process at the American Enterprise Institute, cautions against overreacting. "Lobbyists are a necessary fourth branch of government. It's clear that the Founding Fathers intended for all incumbent senators to have at least $100 to run for re-election. Adjusted for inflation, that comes out to almost exactly $10 million today."

"Without people like Bart, most of our senators would not be able to raise the money," Mr. Ornstein explained yesterday in AEI's plushly furnished bomb shelter for policy analysts. "Ordinary voters might come to exercise undue influence."

With characteristic modesty, Mr. Blackball concurs with Mr. Ornstein. "I'm generally impressed with the ability of congressmen to absorb ever larger amounts of cash. If James Madison were here today, he'd say, 'This is what we envisioned.' "

'Average' Telephone

Dial tones play a key role.

Mr. Average, a sprightly lifelong resident of Washington, blushes when assistant secretaries from the Commerce Department around the corner regularly emerge during lunch hour to call up a Swedish telephone sex service.

There are even whispers around this town that Assistant Secretary of Defense Richard Perle lost a quarter on Average's corner the other day. He reportedly attempted to dial the Strategic Air Command but reached a Chinese carry-out restaurant in suburban Virginia by mi[illegible] Washington insiders

Teflon in Outer Space

By BARBARA G. RAKINGITIN
Special to the Washington Squawk

WASHINGTON, Sept. 14 — A new theory of political reality is rapidly winning adherents in Washington, according to many Capitol Hill observers. The startling new doctrine, known to insiders as Perception Shielding, holds that in a town where the perception of the reality is often more real than the reality of the perception, even Teflon needs to be scrubbed.

The old theory of Teflon came into vogue the day before yesterday. "It was an important theory as far as it went," said a top aide to House Speaker Thomas P. ("Tip") O'Neill. "But Teflon couldn't reproduce itself. It couldn't survive in outer space."

Some critics argue, however, that perceptions are just that, perceptions, and that only reality is real. While still a minority viewpoint in this town, support for "Reality" jumped four points in a public opinion poll taken yesterday afternoon.

The survey, however, was taken before last night's Soviet ICBM attack on Indianapolis, leading some analysts to

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STANLEY KAUFFMANN ON FILMS

High Pressure and Low

Marsha Norman has adapted her play *'night, Mother* for the screen and has helped it slightly in a negative way, by a small omission. But it remains an artificiality, a stunt, which (like Lanford Wilson's *Talley's Folly*) is so proud of its clever shape that in the end pallid cleverness is all it has to offer.

Jessie Cates, in her late 30s, lives with her widowed mother, Thelma, in a cutesy house somewhere in a rural but not backwoods region. At the beginning, Jessie tells Thelma that she is going to kill herself. Thelma tries to dissuade her. After an hour and a half of talk, Jessie runs into her bedroom, locks the door, and shoots herself. During that hour and a half, we learn that Jessie is divorced, has a teenage drug-addict son, and is epileptic, though she has had no attacks for a year. The remission is, I assume, to assure us that Jessie is committing suicide for reasons other than physical ones; the illness itself is meant to link her with her father, who also was epileptic. Jessie is going to kill herself because " 'I' never got here." She feels that if she lived another 50 years, she would be in the same empty condition. The author makes some attempt to bond Jessie and her dead father against her petulant old ninny of a mother, who never loved her husband. But since the author never shows that this alliance has anything to do with Jessie's decision, all the exploration and reminiscence degenerate into palaver to fill out the time frame.

'night, Mother
(Universal)
Sherman's March
(First Run Features)

Jessie is not neurotic, not desperate. She is much more organized and self-possessed than her mother. Her decision to kill herself is supposed to come from a dispassionate, philosophical view. Why does she announce the decision to her mother? She says she wants to spare Thelma the pain of discovery, but in effect she gives Thelma 90 extra minutes of pain. Why doesn't the silly, childish Thelma become hysterical instead of trying to be persuasive and appealing? Because that would spoil the author's design.

I quote from my review of the play (published elsewhere):

> If the play were true—to Norman's characters as she wants us to think of them—it wouldn't exist. Either Jessie would shoot herself before it begins or as soon as she discloses her plans, Thelma would collapse. . . . Thelma's one impeccable line comes right after the shot. Against the locked bedroom door she sobs: "Forgive me. I thought you were mine." The drama that really leads to that line—of a clawing Electra complex, of the mother's mirror-image hatreds, and of pity overarching both—has not been written.

Norman has omitted that last line from the screenplay. Thus at least she avoids suggesting the play/film that this might have been.

The screenplay "opens up" the play conventionally: we see rooms other than the play's one room, we see other members of the family outside. Still it remains a two-character piece. Such a piece needs two virtuosos, and this film doesn't have them. Anne Bancroft, the Thelma, is a vulgar actress. Almost every choice she makes, from her first mugging outside the window, seems to have been decided before a mirror by a woman of defective taste. Her defects are underscored here because she apparently has no picture of the woman as a whole: she merely moves from point to point, maneuvering to score with each one. Sissy Spacek, the Jessie, is much better. To the best of her ability, she tries to realize a character out of the adduced characteristics that Norman provides. But Spacek doesn't have *enough* ability. She does nothing false; she is just insufficiently interesting.

Tom Moore, director of the first theater production, also directed the film. He overdoes reaction shots: too often he insists on showing us the listener's face, while the other one is talking, although we know very well what the reaction is. Moore also seems to be walking a tightrope: if he shoots one scene over Bancroft's shoulder, focusing on Spacek for a time, he very soon does the reverse. As for his work with the two women, I'd assume that it was difficult to help Bancroft but that Spacek responded.

This is a good time in which to release a film of small virtues. The flatness of the surrounding countryside helps. It has helped a modest film called *Sherman's March*.

In 1981, a filmmaker named Ross McElwee, who now teaches film at Harvard, was given a grant to do a documentary in the region through which Sherman marched in 1864, to investigate any persisting aftereffects of the march. For personal reasons, McElwee's project amplified into a personal pilgrimage, romantic-erotic, with interspersed visits to Civil War memorials. Mainly, *Sherman's March* is a series of extended visits with McElwee's former girlfriends and with

FILMS WORTH SEEING

Down by Law. Black and white, ultranaturalistic until the incredible pops up. Jim Jarmusch teases us sardonically about our film-audience gullibility in this tale of three cons who escape from a New Orleans jail. (Reviewed 9/29/86)

Next Summer. A comfy old-fashioned French comedy-drama, made to amuse and please, which it does. Philippe Noiret, Claudia Cardinale, and Marie Trintignant help greatly. (9/8/86)

Otello. Franco Zeffirelli's best work. Verdi's masterpiece (abridged) is not entirely comfortable on screen, but it has splendid performances by Placido Domingo and Justino Diaz. (10/6/86)

She's Gotta Have It. Lively, pungent, if occasionally derivative comedy about the sex lives of young, middle-class blacks. Spike Lee, the writer-director, is in the cast and acts well, too. (9/15 & 22/86)

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some new ones. McElwee's reticent voice-over connects and comments.

By now, we all know that "three's a crowd" is false if the third presence is a portable camera-sound recorder. The least histrionic people very soon get accustomed to being filmed in daily actions. Moreover, we soon get the sense that they are performing *themselves*, quite comfortably. McElwee had an added advantage: his first subject—in his home state, North Carolina—was an aspiring actress who needed no coaxing. That first interview-chronicle also sets the general tone of the film: amiably wry, slightly amused without any mockery. McElwee was highly attracted to the would-be actress and, with affection, evokes the self-portrait of a sexy, faintly silly young woman. At the other end of the histrionic spectrum is a young woman on an island off Georgia, living a reclusive life as she works on her deep-dome dissertation. Even she, intelligent and cool, is led by McElwee into revelation of self—not secrets but self. I don't imply that McElwee tricked people hostilely: in fact, he had an affair with the doctoral candidate and was genuinely fond of her. Still, his unpressuring, almost lackadaisical attitude turned out to be more effective in releasing people than harrying might have been.

Mixed with the personal episodes are tours of war memorials, a glimpse of a Burt Reynolds location shoot, moments in low-down bars, and a trip to an ultrarightist colony off in the woods. Some viewers have found latent symbolism in the combination of these interludes with McElwee's amorous interests, Eros as guide to the contemporary South. To me, this insight is factitious. The ex post facto discovery of unintended achievements is a modern disease. McElwee's ambling life, as he tells us on the sound track, just leads him from one place to another. "I'm filming my life in order to have a life to film," he tells us at one point. No other design.

That, however, is why *Sherman's March* is a bit disruptive. It ought not to hold us: it breaks copybook rules of form and purpose. But it does hold us. It proves yet again that the act of filming itself transfigures the commonplace—up to a point, anyway. Not all of these conversations would hold us in life as they do here. And McElwee is so offhandedly self-deprecating and unmotivated that his peregrinations, discoveries, and reunions win our sympathy. □

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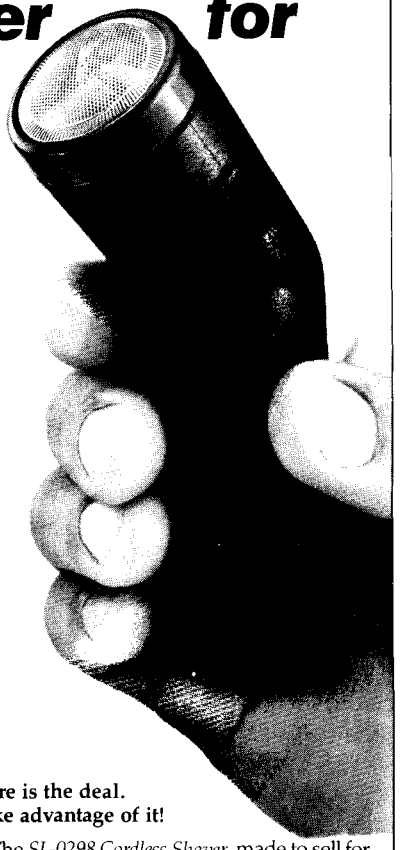

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The new American writing and its mentor.

THE SCHOOL OF LISH

BY SVEN BIRKERTS

When I had my interview with Arnold Gingrich at *Esquire* and he asked me what kind of fiction I was going to be publishing, I said, "The new fiction." He said, "What's that?" I said, "I'll get out there and find it, Mr. Gingrich."

—Gordon Lish

Long-time readers of American fiction will probably have noticed certain changes in the product during the last few decades. A good deal of the gravity, scope, and narrative energy seems to have gone out of our prose. Formerly there were lives, fates. Now, increasingly, we greet disembodied characters who move about in a generic sort of present. Events on the page are dictated less by complex causes than by authorial fiat. While adherents of the poststructuralist disciplines may find this exalting and confirming, the "dear Reader" tacitly addressed by a more traditional fiction registers a growing despair.

The first signs of disturbance came during the late '60s, when writers like Donald Barthelme, Kurt Vonnegut, Robert Coover, John Barth, and E. L. Doctorow began to assault the narrative norms. Different as their subversions were—they included surreal disjunctions, the mixing of high and low genres, and the use of self-reflexive "metafictional" techniques—the end was the same: the sustaining pretenses of fiction were powerfully undermined. The influence of this attack was felt in every quarter; even professedly rearguard stylists found it ever more difficult to generate the necessary authority.

The spirit of playful subterfuge and interrogation vanished, however, along with the counterculture. In its place there appeared a deep unease. Fiction writers neither resumed the old ways nor went with the dare of the new. In a climate of social instability, both the novel and the story drew in their wings. Raymond Carver, Ann Beattie, Frederick Barthelme, and others tried to forge a prose out of whatever had not been decimated by their predecessors. Rooting their work in an indefinite present, they refused to essay the creation of coherent fictional worlds. Their example caught on. Styles everywhere became numbly diaristic. Structures were collage-derived. The episode, the paragraph, the sentence, the phrase were the new units of composition. The literary glamor of the '70s attached to the fragmented writings of Renata Adler and Joan Didion, and an army of epigones rose up to follow.

If fiction was once an empire on which the sun never set, it is no longer. Nowadays we rarely meet with a work that tries to bring a larger social context to life, or that explores with any conviction what it means to live in an era of broken connections. In this media culture, fiction seems no longer charged with the mirroring of reality. And yet words keep coming. A whole new generation of prose stylists advances behind the Barthelmes, Carvers, Adlers, and Beatties, a generation that studies the moves and devices of these "masters" as avidly as mid-century writers studied Hemingway, Faulkner, and Joyce.

In casting about for some way to give the newest tendencies a habitation and a name, we might do worse than fix upon a particular office at the firm of Alfred A. Knopf, in which sits an energetic and outspoken editor named Gordon Lish. Lish is right now very much at the epicenter of American literary publishing. For one thing, he edits a fair number of "hot" young novelists and story writers. But there are his other activities as well. Lish has for years conducted highly selective fiction workshops in New York and elsewhere—not infrequently assisting his stars into print and into publishing careers. He is also presently neck-deep in preparations to launch a magazine, *The Quarterly*, which will be subsidized and distributed through the Random House network. (The first issue is scheduled for the spring of next year.) On top of all this, Lish is himself a determined practitioner of post-Carver fiction, with a story collection and two novels to his credit.

Lish's diversified enterprise, and his literary and practical influence, have drawn extremes of response. Nothing could have been more worshipful, for instance, than Amy Hempel's article in *Vanity Fair* a few years ago ("Captain Fiction," it was called), which opened with this bold-faced blurb: "Gordon Lish is the Lee Strasberg of American fiction." Writing as a student and a published discovery of Lish's, Hempel fizzed exuberantly about his qualities as a teacher, dwelling upon his idiosyncrasy, his assertive candor, his engagement ("For thirteen weeks it is a class in which first Lish and then his students get the spirit and testify"), and not least, his willingness to perform extramural services for the deserving.

A more astringent view of this activity of discovery and promotion is to be found in Joe David Bellamy's essay "A Downpour of Literary Republicanism" in a recent issue of the *Mississippi Review*. Bellamy suggests that Lish is an institution in some ways as important as the *New Yorker*. Calling him a "cultural commissar" and identifying his aesthetic with Republican conservatism (for its interest in outer, documentary narrative, as opposed to inner, subjective experimentation), Bellamy concludes by goggling at the power that Lish commands: "possibly enough to make it rain if he wants it to rain."

Hempel has evidently passed too many mesmerized hours staring at her book contract, Bellamy too many brooding over his Saul Steinberg poster of New York; but surely some truth can be shaken out of both. Lish does command power. He has gone on from his earlier days of publishing and proselytizing for writers like Carver in *Esquire*, where he was fiction editor for eight years, to put together a distinctive, if not universally appealing, roster of talents for Knopf. His list includes Anderson Ferrell, Barry Hannah, Hempel, Bette Howland, Janet Kauffman, Raymond Kennedy, Nancy Lemann, Michael Martone, Bette Pesetsky, Mary Robison, Leon Rooke. And he has abetted a career or two; a few years back, for instance, Lish secured a contract for his student Anderson Ferrell on the strength of a few paragraphs of prose.

Still, it's obviously foolish to think of the man as omnipotent. While he will extol the trust placed in him by Knopf's president, Robert Gottlieb—"No question," says Lish, "I am able to indulge my fantasies at the expense of a power-

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Sven Birkerts's *Auspices*, a collection of essays on contemporary literature, will be published by William Morrow.

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Parents League of the United States
1220 L Street, N.W. Suite 425
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ful organization"—he does have a tether. He has tried for years to put across one of his favorite stylists, Stanley G. Crawford, author of the novella *Log of the S.S. The Mrs. Unguentine*, without success. Nor could Lish be called capricious. Ferrell's short novel, *Where She Was*, is a sharply realized work of prose; it amply deserves to have been published. The issue, perhaps, is not so much that Lish can indulge his fantasies, but that so few other editors manage to do the same.

WHAT FINALLY makes Lish exceptional among editors is his devotion to the young. A xeroxed announcement for *The Quarterly* advises that the magazine "is open to all comers, but will doubtless prove to be particularly hospitable to the work of the young and unsung." Lish is frank about his predilections and his agenda. "If I were given the option of publishing the fourth great work by author A," he states, "and the OK first book by author B, I would be inclined to go with the OK first book."

But he also admits to an ambition greater than just discovering the publishable young. Lish wants to find and train the next titleholder, the future Great American Novelist. He uses the analogy of a boxing coach: "I can tell you how to take the guy, though I can't do it myself." And the guy, the writer that Lish admires above all others and hence is determined to unseat, is ... Harold Brodkey.

Harold Brodkey? Yes, emphatically. Lish admits no reservations to his adoration. Brodkey-love swamps every other subject of conversation, though Lish will, to be fair, also sing arias of praise for Cynthia Ozick and Don DeLillo. He is convinced, in part on the strength of published work, but especially on what he has read of the legendary (some would say too legendary) work in progress, *A Party of Animals*, that Brodkey is the prose master of our century. He acknowledges, of course, the credibility problem that comes with declaring the pre-eminence of a novelist whose major work is still under wraps, but as he puts it, "The evidence is before me ... and there it is."

Lish cites as the cardinal virtues of Brodkey's prose its intelligence, its moral seriousness, its relentlessness. He particularly admires what he sees as the author's willingness always to remake himself. "I don't think there's anyone who is coming onto the page so ferociously," he says. "I read Brodkey and I can't catch my breath." Brodkey presents, for Lish, in every way the opposite of the writing represented by Saul Bellow, whose fiction he derides as pretentious and predictable. Asked if anyone can challenge this Goliath, he smiles. "Somewhere out there is a young writer who has what it takes."

IT'S HARD TO get things square. Here we have Lish's testimony on behalf of Brodkey, a writer well along in his career, who is working with a perfectionist's resolve on a grand novel, refusing to publish before he's ready. There we have the example of Lish himself, editor and evangelist of the unsung, doing everything he can to get their young prose in front of an audience, hoping that one of them will be the next Brodkey. But there is still a greater contradiction. Where Brodkey's prose aims at grandeur, at a dynamic totality that can embrace ideas, psychological motivations, moral and spiritual questioning, Lish's progeny come across almost without exception as purveyors of the slight and the fragmented. They are sculptors of sentences rather than of worlds. Their hunt for essences bypasses existence. Ferocity is nowhere in evidence.

Of course Lish's authors are not all of a single stripe. Though they tend to youthfulness, and their productions to slimness—each one can be read in an evening—there seems to be little similarity between a book like Leon Rooke's *Shakespeare's Dog*, which looks at the Bard through the eyes of his randy and highly verbal dog, Mr. Hooker, and the pruned contemporaneity of a story collection by Mary Robison or Amy Hempel. And between these two poles we get the denser domestic portraits of Janet Kauffman and the airy biographical fantasies of Michael Martone. But underneath the variegated surface, behind the sentence-by-sentence expertise, are indications of what is either a new aesthetic or else a crisis in the art. Whichever it is, it has very little to do with Brodkey, Ozick, or DeLillo.

Joe David Bellamy's charge of "literary Republicanism" is misleading when applied to this group of writers. Doubtless Bellamy had Carver's fiction in mind when he coined the epithet. And while Carver's fidelity to grim, middle- and lower-class exteriors, and to a tactic of unstated motivation, has been influential, things have changed since his heyday in the early '70s. Lish's writers take a much freer hand with subject matter, voice, and narrative exposition. And what has passed into their fiction, whether from Carver, Beattie, or the spirit of the time, is a total refusal of any vision of larger social connection. Indeed, in this respect Lish's authors are only a case in point. Most of contemporary fiction is similarly skewed. Characters are shown as moving in contained worlds, alone, or with family, friends, and lovers. Everything beyond the local is alien chaos. The social fabric, once the complex and comprehensive subject of fiction, can no longer be found. Nor is there any attempt, as in the novels of Don DeLillo, to make a subject out of this very absence of social bonds. Among these writers a centripetal isolation prevails; the world never extends illusionistically beyond the cast assembled on the stage. This might explain why so many of these books are slight. The writers have shorn themselves, or they have been shorn of, a central resource.

LISH'S OWN work is relevant here, for he preaches what he practices. The stories in his 1977 collection, *What I Know So Far*, progress by way of an anxious staccato, building their episodic structures along the fault lines of discontinuous speech patterns. The sentences capture the reader with their erratic and colloquial beat:

> Alan Silver moved in. He moved in when there were seven houses and four still going up. He was twelve. Maybe I was nine by then. So that's the boys from two houses. The other five had boys in them too.

They deny him, however, any kind of stable fictional order. Lish's novel *Dear Mr. Capote* (1983) worked similarly, though the subject matter was horrific: the colloquial jumps came out of the mouth of a demented serial killer. But *Peru*, his novel published this year, achieves an eerie profundity absent from the other work. For Lish has finally matched this talky, nipped-off style to its ideal subject—the gradual recovery of a repressed childhood memory. The flat word-sounds and incessant repetitions eventually reveal the violent psyche of a lonely child. Needless to say, nothing exists beyond the recursive monody of the narrator's voice and the handful of images that it summons up. Lish, then, is the paradigmatic Lish author.

The others can be parceled into several roughly bounded camps. Mary Robison, Bette Pesetsky, and Amy Hempel would definitely fit together into one of these. They might be described as the main

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legatees of the Carver influence. Their collective muse owes a great deal to his opaque technique and his close-focus scene building. In their stories (though Robison and Pesetsky have written novels, their talents favor brevity) we encounter sudden, brightly lit tableaux animated by characters that have either been damaged into eccentricity or else scorched to blankness by the inchoate forces of modernity. Strange behavior and terrifying revelations are set before us in neutral, non-judgmental tones. Scenes are generally given in the present tense, and all background has been carefully cut away. The reader's job, it appears, is to supply the excised humanity, to be shocked and stricken on behalf of the affectless.

IN MARY ROBISON'S "Weekday," from *Days* (1979), a divorced couple has a short reunion that is at once intimate and edged with hostility. As Christine, the ex-wife, cuts Guidry's hair—both have been swilling vodka all morning—we hear the following exchange:

> "I think you hang around with faggots," Guidry said.
>
> "Don't forget I'm cutting your hair. You could come out of this looking pretty funny."
>
> Guidry said, "I don't think you're taking your life seriously."
>
> "Probably not."
>
> "Not," Guidry said. "Just not. Your father died last year. Your daughter had her first period, which you don't even know about."
>
> "Michelle?" Christine said.
>
> "That's the one," Guidry said. "I had to send her up to Mom's. I know a little about it, but."
>
> "When?" Christine said.
>
> "A month ago."
>
> "She's only ten."
>
> "She's eleven."

The title piece of Bette Pesetsky's *Stories up to a Point* (1981), meanwhile, presents this give-and-take between husband and wife on the subject of their estranged daughter:

> My husband sits down at the breakfast table and slams the *Times* across the toaster. "If she ever calls," he declares, "if she ever calls, you are to hang up at once, do you hear?" "I will," I reply. "No, wait," he says. "Don't do that. Talk to her first. But coldly. Let her ask to come home or for money. Then tell her about her room. Tell her how I sold everything—her furniture, her pictures. Be sure and tell her how I burned her papers, her books, her clothes, and her record collection. Tell her that her room is now an upstairs den. Mention the console television in the corner. She'll hate that." "I'll do just that," I say. "Swear it to me." "I swear," I say. "How do you want your toast?"

Finally, Amy Hempel's story, "In the Cemetery Where Al Jolson Is Buried," moves from scene to scene by tracking the tough wisecracking between two friends, one of whom is dying in the hospital:

> She is flirting with the Good Doctor, who has just appeared. Unlike the Bad Doctor, who checks the IV drip before saying good morning, the Good Doctor says things like "God didn't give epileptics a fair shake." The Good Doctor awards himself points for the cripples he could have hit in the parking lot. Because the Good Doctor is a little in love with her, he says maybe a year. He pulls a chair up to her bed and suggests I might like to spend an hour on the beach.
>
> "Bring me something back," she says. "Anything from the beach. Or the gift shop. Taste is no object."
>
> He draws the curtains around her bed.
>
> "Wait!" she cries.
>
> I look in at her.
>
> "Anything," she says, "except a magazine subscription."
>
> The doctor turns away.
>
> I watch her mouth laugh.

Here we have a finger on one of the central pulses of contemporary fiction. This stuff is state-of-the-art. The same tonality can be heard in thousands of stories coming out of workshops and writing programs. It is choking the pages of literary magazines as well as glossies. This manner is what results when talent and inexperience go out looking for subject matter. The cuttings show three orders of tragedy—a lost marriage, a lost daughter, the imminent loss of life—and a single mode of response. In each case there is a displacement of crisis by repartee, an avoidance of human depths that a different sort of author would choose to plumb and to illuminate.

In the understated scenarios of Carver, who learned much from Hemingway, the unspoken or avoided material has a chance of reaching the reader. The opaque surfaces are designed to transmit suffering. Carver's characters do not reveal emotion, either because it overwhelms them, or because muteness is seen as a talisman of resistance; but the reader does believe that somewhere, perhaps only in the author's heart, the real emotion existed, was felt. No chance of that here. The diction of Robison, Pesetsky, and Hempel ensures that we will remain unaffected. Everything genuine

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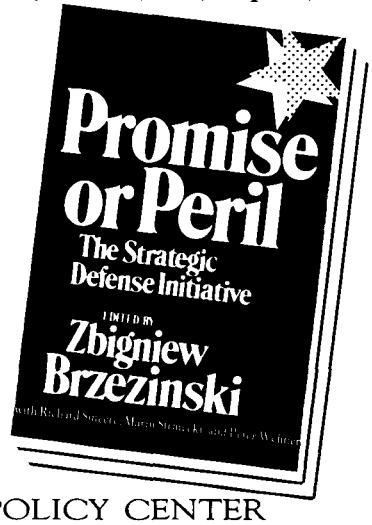

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has been transposed into the key of the one-liner. We are to remark, rather, the disjunction between the presentation and what it buries, and so we do. But we can do nothing about it. We know that there is no payoff.

This prose has been styled to look "real." It vigorously mimes the banalities and the discontinuities of ordinary speech. And yet, reading these stories, I am struck by nothing so much as their falsification of the grain of experience. These writers may owe some of their tricks to Carver, but their real antecedents are not literary at all. They're televised. The pace and pitch, the timing—everything has been deftly lifted from the screen, even from the prime-time sitcom. Not intentionally, I imagine. Still, listen in as you read. Do you hear human voices, or something closer to TV gabble? In certain passages I almost expect to hear the laugh track start up.

FORTUNATELY NOT all of the fiction, not even by younger writers, has been bent by these pressures. Within this same Knopf corral, a very different, and in some ways more salutary, approach has been taken by linguistically attuned stylists such as Barry Hannah and Leon Rooke. In their work we at least get the freshening pleasures of language and a feeling of anarchic sport. Their fiction does not derive from the imperatives of plot or character; it has its source in the rhythms and sound-play options of the sentence. Hannah, whom Lish credits with "more of an impact on how sentences get written all round than Raymond Carver," takes obvious delight in his ability to jump through hoops with a flourish. Opening his novel *Ray* (1980) quite at random, I find his amoral but tenderhearted doctor reminiscing as follows:

> One night, when I was in Saigon, a chicken colonel's wife walked past my Yamaha motorbike on the street. My eyes got wide and my heart was molasses. She walked by me, clicking her heels, tanned legs so lean, a fine joyful sense of her sex uplifted at the juncture of her thighs.

We see the craft and care of making, but only later, after we have siphoned up the pleasure.

And here is Rooke's Mr. Hooker, dilating on the charms of his beloved bitch, Marr:

> I have always liked her feet: the hobgoblin tufts of brightness growing up between the black pads like weeds through stone; the smooth nails that curve as little moons to reach points sharper than my own. Her deft ankles too. The beauteous knees. She shook herself, then licked her upper thigh.

Hannah and Rooke are word-men. Sprinters. Sentence acrobats. They can peg to a millimeter a physical sensation. They can start a rumble between clauses, if they've a mind to. This is what we turn to them for. And this is their limit. No use looking for excavated depths of character or immersions in plot. As in the stories of Robison and company, lives are caught in midflight. The past is alluded to randomly, in fragments, if at all. What keeps us going in Robison's work are the promises of incongruous surprise and the blandishments of paradox. (Meager fare, I'd say.) With Hannah and Rooke, it's the velocity of the prose, and the flash that comes when word-sounds touch and ignite in the ear.

TWO NOVELLAS of the Lish school, Ferrell's *Where She Was* (1985) and Kauffman's *Collaborators* (1986), come slightly closer to rewarding conventional expectations. Each undertakes, in its way, to develop a character portrait through a succession of carefully placed vignettes. Again, there is nothing so overt as plot. *Collaborators*, the more successful of the two, reveals to us the complex, yet distinct, stages of a mother-daughter relationship. A tragic event is at the root—the mother has a disabling stroke midway through the book—and Kauffman meets the emotional demands squarely. The mother's efforts to recover speech and motor skills press sharply on the daughter's maturing sensibility:

> She pointed at the ground, saying, Dare, dare, or There, there.
>
> What is it?
>
> There! she said.
>
> In the ditch at the edge of the field was a groundhog hole. That's all I could see.
>
> That? You mean that groundhog hole?
>
> Yes! Her face was red with the explosive sounds of the word.

Kauffman's novel is set, for the most part, on a tobacco farm in Pennsylvania. Ferrell's *Where She Was* is also located, interestingly enough, in tobacco country. The focus, however, is much less on relationships. Ferrell is after a more solemnly mythic, a more truly existential, portrayal. His Cleo Lewis, a hardworking mother and wife, is full of inarticulate longings. In the face of these, the husband and children appear peripheral. But she does not know what she longs for. When local churches and preachers fail her, she succumbs to the call of a mysterious drifter.

Though Ferrell tends to overwrite in places, to layer atmospheric effects with a loaded brush, he does at times achieve a genuine force. Building periodic rhythms account for much of the effect:

> They walked through the forest. The trees began to be farther apart and taller. Cleo smelled creek water. It was as if the smell came from his hair and blew around her, a cool smell, a smell so strong Cleo could feel it against the back of her throat, a damp, rich smell as rank as the dirt—a smell that would grow things.

How different from this is Nancy Lemann's light-handed conjuring of New Orleans in *Lives of the Saints* (1985). Where Ferrell is dense and portentous, Lemann is nimble and casual-seeming. The ghost of a story—no more—emerges from the vignettes she convokes. A young woman, Louise, is in love with a gallant and eccentric ne'er-do-well named Claude. He moves in and out of her sights, mostly against an impressionistically dabbed backdrop of New Orleans. Louise's voice trips erratically through the vast registers of love, coaxing, denying, breaking down in admission:

> Yankee girls probably sat around having philosophically inquiring conversations about the meaning of art. But Claude would never talk about serious things. He was always too busy making lame-brained jokes or talking about the small things. He would probably tell them that the dress they were wearing reminded him of some huge thing—all he wanted to do was plummet to the depths of factuality about what you were doing at that exact moment, and what you were really like. He was just a simple dark-haired Tareyton smoker, completely wry.
>
> My heart was not trained to love anyone but him.

THIS, THEN, is Lish's squadron, most of it. The writers are, as I say, outwardly various enough. But from a certain angle, taking a tight noon-hour squint, one can discern a common style. It is all very modern, or postmodern. The byte-sized perceptions, set in an eternal present, are the natural effluence of an electronically connected, stimulus-saturated culture. In a sense, they are what we have earned for ourselves: these writers may satisfy themselves that they have, intentionally or not, mirrored our world to us, mimicked the sensations of contemporary experience. Still, in another sense, their work represents an abro-

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gation of literary responsibility. If fiction is to survive as something more than a coterie sport, it must venture something greater than a passive reflection of fragmentation and unease. Indeed, it must manifest some of the very qualities that Lish has attributed to the work of Harold Brodkey: intelligence, moral seriousness, and relentlessness. And, I would add, comprehensiveness and scope.

I am not calling for a curmudgeonly return to the tradition of the 19th-century narrative. Far from it. The modernist revolution in the early part of the century left the writer with an arsenal of new devices and modes—interior monologue, shifting narrators, collage, and temporal modulation, to name but a few—as well as a high injunction: to dare a prose that can face chaos and master it with vision. Woolf, Joyce, Lawrence, Faulkner, Musil, Broch, Kafka—these artists did not finish off fiction; they opened new sluices for it. And in our own time American novelists like Pynchon, Bellow, and Percy have carried on the hard task of probing our place in the turbulent cultural present. All three have managed to keep their focus wide and their grasp on the particular steady. Not one of them has fallen back upon convention for its own sake.

Of course these are all masters in late career. Theirs will not be the shaping voices of the coming decades. It will fall to the younger authors, Lish's among them, to bring the world over into words. But this will not be possible without more exertion and more willingness to risk than many young writers have shown. The careful construction of sentences and paragraphs is a first step, not a final goal. The world of the future is bound to be more dispersed and more synthetic than it is now. There is a real danger, then, that reality will outstrip the writer's ability—if expression fails, understanding fails too. It is necessary to believe, with Gordon Lish, that there is undiscovered greatness in the young. But it is hard to rest easy with the growing cult of small-stage pyrotechnics. The impending challenges are of a different magnitude.

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007, LICENSED TO KILL?

"The Target is Destroyed": What Really Happened to Flight 007 and What America Knew About It by Seymour M. Hersh

(Random House, 282 pp., $17.95)

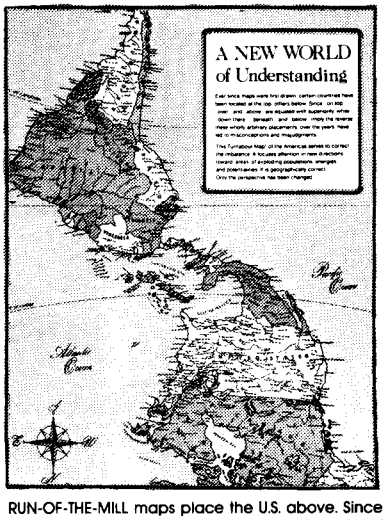
In the very first words of his introduction, Seymour Hersh writes:

> This book began because of the courage of a senior military intelligence officer who, while being interviewed late in 1984 on the shoot-down of Flight 007, decided to tell what he thought was the real story: the abuse of communications intelligence.

But if the book had not "begun" until then, why was Hersh already interviewing a presumably hard-to-interview intelligence officer on its subject? It could hardly have been for straight reportage: Flight KE 007 of Korean Airlines from Anchorage to Seoul was destroyed on the night of August 31/September 1, 1983, and no newspaper, however indulgent, would print news that stale. Thus, the misdirection to come—that the "real" story of Flight 007 is the American abuse of communications intelligence, rather than the Soviet destruction of the aircraft—is introduced by a transparent piece of misrepresentation.

For obviously Hersh had already launched his investigation, whose goal was to identify the true guilty party in the destruction of Flight 007 and the killing of its 265 passengers and crew. That culprit could not possibly be the Soviet Union: no investigative reporter can earn his keep by the mere confirmation of well-known fact, certainly not Seymour Hersh, discoverer of My Lai and one of our premier cover-up experts. It had to be the United States that caused all those deaths, either by an abusive exploitation of the flight for intelligence purposes that went wrong, or by a deliberate provocation that went right and duly enticed the Soviet attack. Only that would be consistent with Hersh's previous books, all of which are dedicated to the exposure of secret

Corrective perspective



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American ill deeds. Was it the CIA or the NSA that had done it? And was the purpose technical-military, that is to force the Soviet Union to reveal its radar methods and air intercept procedures, or was it political, to precipitate an incident that would cast the Soviet Union in an evil light? Or was Flight 007 simply being used as a platform for intelligence sensors, and not meant to be shot down at all?

OF COURSE, if Hersh had declared his true purpose in his introduction, he could scarcely have justified the publication of his book, which in spite of its breathless subtitle ("What really happened . . .") contains no revelations at all, let alone any indications of American involvement in the destruction of Flight 007. Having found no guilty party in the CIA or NSA, nor in the EPA or HUD for that matter, and far too professional to construe a conspiracy out of irrelevant facts or plain fantasies (as the authors of two other books on Flight 007 have done), Hersh could have kept silent. But evidently he had invested too many months of his life in the effort to uncover the latest conspiracy, and having found nothing he decided to make the best of a bad job. Hersh's book is thus made of the leftovers of a failed investigation: a review of the 1978 incident in which an off-course Korean Boeing 707 was shot down (quite deliberately, beyond any doubt that time, as duly noted); a long, very detailed account of what intelligence was collected regarding Flight 007, how, by whom, and when (no, the attack was not being monitored as it was happening; Flight 007 could not have been warned); another 80-odd pages of detail on the timing and nature of successive American declarations about the incident (these pages contain the one charge Hersh actually makes against the administration: that it publicly misrepresented the deed, since it is possible that the Soviets meant to shoot down "only" an American military aircraft); 44 more pages of minute details on the flight, the likely cause of its errant navigation, and the attack itself; and finally a few pages of Hersh's conclusions, of which more below.

To be able to criticize the administration's response to the shoot-down, Hersh depicts himself in the unfamiliar and wildly unconvincing role of a protector of American intelligence secrets. *Of course* there was an abuse of precious communications intelligence by the administration. A source was indeed compromised by the public disclosure before the United Nations and the world media of the intercepted voice communications between the Soviet ground controller and the SU-15 fighter, which ended with that expression of dehumanizing cruelty that gives this book its title: "The target is destroyed." The administration, needless to say, was prompted to disclose an important source precisely by the climate of distrust that Hersh and others like him have striven so hard to sustain. And it is perfectly credible that a military intelligence officer would have complained about it, even if it is totally incredible that Hersh would have shared his professional concern for the maintenance of official secrecy.

Those who wish to find out who exactly was responsible, George Shultz or William Casey or Ronald Reagan himself, or rather those who wish to deduce who among their many aides spoke to Hersh and in what terms, may choose to read his long and tedious chapter ("The Politics") on the subject. As he attributes sundry lucubrations to various third-level officials, the old distinction applies more than ever: servants talk about people, gentlemen talk about ideas. For of course, wise or unwise, the decision to release the information was collective. Moreover, Hersh's style exudes a confidence that should not be taken at face value. On page 100, for example, he makes much of the influence of Fritz Ermath, a senior CIA official. Now there is such a person, but William Casey could hardly have been "relying heavily" on his advice because he was not even in the CIA at the time, nor indeed anywhere in government. Unfortunately this is not the sort of book that can be scrutinized for errors, since it lacks detailed citations. But after a howler like that, one wonders where else Hersh's sources have misled him.

HERSH'S HONESTY as a reporter is not in doubt, even if he does dissemble about his motives. But precisely because he does not invent juicy facts where there are none to be found, because he does not concoct intrigues by spinning a web of insinuations of the sort that have kept the *Nation*'s writers busy, Hersh's book is, frankly, very boring. Readers enticed to part with $17.95 by the suggestive, pre-publication stories printed by Hersh's colleagues in the *New York Times* (Hersh will no doubt repay the debt when their own books are about to appear) have solid grounds for a consumer complaint. Only devotees of bureaucratic analysis will find his tales about quite minor frictions between the various intelligence agencies of any interest.

The book contains page after page about the technicalities of airborne intelligence collection. It is a fascinating subject, to be sure, but only in the wider context of military or diplomatic history, as readers of post-Ultra writings well know. In reading of Ultra's role in the Second World War, one can place secret knowledge in the meaningful setting of the sometimes epic decisions it affected. But when nothing actually happens, the particular collection of intelligence—of radar emissions and routine communications and photography—is merely an ordinary affair of technology and administrative procedure. Unless specific indicators of an impending surprise attack are picked up, the data is simply shipped back to Washington, there to be scrutinized at leisure for any nuances and bits of detail it may add to the great mass of accumulated knowledge about adversary armed forces ("strategic intelligence") that is employed in the periodic revision of assessments and for contingency planning. The activity is worthy to be sure, but it is hardly exciting. What Hersh writes on the subject seems quite accurate as far as it goes (his focus is on collection alone), but he adds very little to what has already been published elsewhere. In any case only readers in the trade will find it of sustained interest, particularly Soviet readers of course.

THE FLIGHT of the RC-135 aircraft that was concurrent with a portion of the flight of the KAL Boeing 747 on the night of its destruction was just such a routine collection effort. That particular RC-135 (a converted Boeing 707) was kitted out with large cameras for the photography of ballistic-missile tests. Other RC-135s, fitted with lots of receiving antennas, are used to record Soviet signals and radar emissions. There are others still (which Hersh appears to have missed) that serve as platforms for still other forms of collection. Conspiracy theorists have made much of the coincidence of these two flights. But they overlook, willfully or ignorantly, the anticlimactic fact that RC-135s of one sort or another are up there flying along the Far East periphery of the Soviet Union virtually every day and night—and along a route that necessarily ap-

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proximates the Anchorage-Seoul flight path, because it too has to skirt the Soviet periphery.

According to one conspiracy theory, the RC-135 was in place to observe the Soviet attack in full operational detail—an attack deliberately provoked by the crew of Flight 007, which was necessarily collaborating. (Were they bribed with free tickets to Disneyland?) According to another conspiracy theory, in which the crime is of omission rather than of commission, the RC-135's crew was tracking Flight 007 as it crossed into Soviet territory, Soviet attack instructions were monitored, and quite deliberately nothing was done to warn the Koreans—all this in order to exploit the opportunity of collecting intelligence on Soviet radar and intercept procedures. In a variant of this theory the purpose was instead to exploit the incident for propaganda purposes. And then there is the most complete conspiracy theory, in which more elements are added: an American satellite overhead to monitor Soviet communications, a device planted in the 747 to misdirect its navigation, the RC-135 to watch Soviet reactions, Japanese air traffic controllers who deliberately fail to warn Flight 007 (which is shown off-course on *their* radars), and the management of Korean Airlines fully involved.

ALL THE conspiracy theories are predicated on a confusion between strategic intelligence and tactical intelligence, as well as on the certainty that the United States had to be the guilty party. If there *had* been tactical collection going on, that is the "real-time" monitoring of events for immediate exploitation, and if the RC-135 *had* been equipped and manned accordingly, then it would indeed be possible for all three theories to be true. But that was not the purpose of the flight, or of any flight of that kind, as Hersh himself confirms in excruciating detail. The RC-135 was collecting for Washington analysts, not for immediate use by the members of its crew. They were on board only to work the equipment, not to use the intelligence as it came in. Far from being able to keep Flight 007 under long-range radar observation for any of the various conspiracy purposes, the aircraft that flew that night had no more radar capacity than any airliner. As Hersh writes, "Even an aircraft the size of a 747 cannot be accurately tracked by [an RC-135's] radar . . . until it gets within ten miles." In other words, to monitor the Soviet attack, the RC-135 would itself have had to be inside Soviet airspace, presumably to be destroyed as well—not a very useful procedure, if the purpose of the mission is to bring back the recordings.

In the aftermath of the shoot-down and till this day, Soviet propaganda has offered every one of these conspiracy theories to explain just why Flight 007 had to be shot down. The "special services" of the United States, White House cold warriors, and Korean Airlines have all been accused of having done the deed. (The *Nation* of June 14, 1986, had a long piece on the business history of Korean Airlines, which makes much of its many official connections and naturally ends with the demand for a congressional investigation of Flight 007.) Airliners fitted with inertial navigation devices, as the Korean Boeing 747 undoubtedly was, "cannot lose their way," Soviet spokesmen and conspiracy theorists have said. Such touching faith in the inerrancy of technology raises the interesting question, however, of just why Aeroflot and Cubana fly off-course so often. (It is not for a lack of foreign currency with which to buy the equipment: the same devices are mass-produced in the Soviet Union, if only because they also guide ballistic missiles.) In fact, this particular canard was demolished early, with a wealth of telling detail, by the respected

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Japan-based reporter Murray Sayle (in the *New York Review of Books* of April 25, 1985). His excellent article explained how easily a wrong heading can be set on a plane's inertial system, and then kept there for many hours by a bored crew. Hersh prefers to quote a source of his own but tells much the same story.

THE higher-grade Soviet explanation, the one that Hersh does accept, is that the senior Soviet military officer who ordered the attack from Moscow air-defense headquarters—the fable of an unauthorized local initiative by a since-punished junior officer in the Far East keeps being told as well—did so because he made an "honest" mistake. KE 007 was simply confused with the RC-135 flight path. The obvious problem with such an account, however, is that the RC-135 in question had landed more than an hour before the attack, as Hersh in fact acknowledges.

But Hersh offers another, seemingly plausible argument for a misidentification by Soviet radar operators. Supposedly they started tracking the RC-135, and then projected its track onto the KE 007 flight path that they were actually seeing on their screens. Mistakes of that sort are certainly possible; they are even frequent. Still, we must not overlook the evidence of silence, of the dog that did not bark. How could Soviet radar operators think that Flight 007 was actually the RC-135, without then noticing the absence of Flight 007? A scheduled flight perfectly familiar to them, and duly tracked on a nightly basis, can hardly disappear without explanation. If Flight 007 was misidentified, the other Flight 007 had to be in the air. But the RC-135 could not, in turn, be confused with it, because it had long since landed.

None of the evidence presented by Hersh, who was invited to Moscow during the course of his work and was briefed by Soviet military officers in a totally unprecedented manner, rules out a deliberate intercept of the Korean airliner. The real secret that Hersh has not unearthed, the Soviet Union's true secret that is impenetrably shielded by our tenacious refusal to know it, is that the Soviet Union acted in 1983, and is acting still, like a country at war. No doubt there is an ideological dimension to Soviet behavior, and a more important purely Russian dimension as well, but there is finally nothing very distinctive about much of Soviet conduct: it is no different from the conduct of any country at war. Censorship, travel controls, spy mania, sentries that shoot (remember Major Nicholson?), and fighter interceptors that intercept were once to be found in America as well. This is the secret that we so strongly wish to ignore, for to accept it would mean accepting the need for a corresponding mobilization of our own—something that very few Americans, even the most hawkish, could accept with equanimity. Hence we avert our gaze and ignore the plain evidence before us. On each occasion when the Soviet Union forcefully reminds us that it is at war, we eagerly do our best to forget, until the next incident.

But Seymour Hersh just glides on with his version of the honest-mistake theory, as if it were in any way acceptable for the Soviet Union to shoot down an American aircraft, even if it was military, even if it was loaded with cameras, even if it was quite deliberately intruding. (Not by any imagining could it have been a bomber; and at best it would have gotten away with a few bits of new data.) It is common knowledge, for example, that there are Soviet intrusions into European and Japanese airspace. These Soviet aircraft are generally chased out. Perhaps an attempt might be made to force them to land. But they would not be shot down. And if they were, the loss of life would be harshly condemned and the alleged need to protect paltry secrets would be very properly disregarded. Why should the Soviet Union be silently allowed the privilege of protecting its own airspace by murder?

In the conclusion of his book, Hersh writes: "Flight 007 was a full-fledged crisis made far more dangerous by the extent of misunderstanding and anti-Soviet feeling it engendered." In the *New York Times* a few weeks ago, Soviet spokesmen were quoted as follows: "The American side should have shown more decency by keeping silent about it. . . . Western propaganda . . . sheds torrents of tears over the 'arbitrariness' or 'ruthlessness' of the Soviet authorities." And from Soviet TV commentator Igor Kudren came this: "Can you make relations between two great powers dependent on propagandistic campaigns pursuing temporary political considerations?" The subject was not Flight 007, but Nicholas Daniloff. Unless deterred by professional solidarity, Seymour Hersh is no doubt already investigating the "real" story of the Daniloff affair, attempting to discover whether Daniloff was CIA or NSA, EPA or HUD. And no doubt the *Nation*'s favorite writers are already exploring the dubious links between *U.S. News and World Report* and American intelligence, and the strange pattern of coinciding events: reports about disagreements between Reagan advisers, the visit of Ambassador X to Ambassador Y, the secret meeting at . . .

EDWARD LUTTWAK

Edward Luttwak's book *On the Meaning of Victory: Essays on Strategy* has just been published by Simon and Schuster.

LITTLE AMERICA, ALONE AT LAST

Estrangement: America and the World edited by Sanford J. Ungar

(Oxford University Press, 347 pp., $19.95)

Estrangement. The thesis of this collection of essays on the trials of American foreign policy has an odd ring. How can we be estranged from the world when we have never been more involved in it? Our troops sit on the front lines in Germany and Korea, our Navy patrols the seas, our manufacturers set up shop in every low-wage corner of the earth, the tumbling dollar is still the world's currency, and it is hard to think of a single place on the globe that we do not consider either a crisis area or a vital interest.

People become estranged when they cease to speak the same language or see events in the same way. Nations are supposed to have interests, their relations marked by considerations like strategic advantage and balance of power. How is it possible to be estranged from the world when we spend most of our na-

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tional wealth paying for past wars, preparing for future ones, and covering our debts to other nations?

But one can be in the world and not quite of it. One can be actively engaged and still not quite understand what is going on all around, or how one is perceived through the eyes of others. That is the kind of estrangement to which the authors of these essays address themselves. They agree that there is a kind of estrangement that comes from smugness and self-absorption, from myopic perceptions and stereotypes. By focusing almost exclusively on the Soviet Union for the past 40 years, we have tended to ignore the fact that most of the world is driven by other forces: nationalism, religious fundamentalism, the struggles of poverty, the quest for identity. We have become, in the words of Sanford Ungar, "estranged from that complex world—separate, aloof, more alone than even the most cynical or pessimistic observers might have predicted in the heyday of American postwar power."

IT IS HARD to do much traveling these days, whether in Europe, Latin America, or most of what are called, sometimes euphemistically, the emerging nations, without picking up a sense of disenchantment with, or even antagonism toward, the United States. This has nothing to do with the diatribes that occasionally take place at the United Nations and that brought such publicity to some of our ambassadors there. It is, rather, a feeling that the United States is not as exceptional as Americans like to believe; that with its sputtering and debt-ridden economy, its bloated military, its neglected poor, its resentful underclass, its violent streets, its drugs and pornography, and its TV messiahs, it is no longer much of a role model.

From the vantage point of, let us say, a Moslem fundamentalist, there is not much to choose between America and Russia. Both are Western, materialistic, militaristic, hegemonic powers intent on expanding their control and spreading their heresies. But even to those who do not relegate the superpowers to a "moral equivalence" (to use the phrase dreaded by neoconservatives), there is among our allies in Europe a belief that the United States no longer has anything very interesting to say to them. The poor and oppressed of the Third World may come to America looking for food and dignity, but the Europeans much prefer their own prosperous, orderly societies where the trains run fast, cultural amenities are subsidized, and no one is denied decent housing or medical care.

If the world finds less to admire in us than it once did, we also have become less connected with it. Estrangement is not an inappropriate word, then, for it is the way that many foreigners describe not only our attitude toward them, but our relations with one another. As a nation we have always been self-absorbed. During the past few years we have become egregiously self-congratulatory. We have developed a fixation on ourselves; but it is a fixation that sees only our virtues, not our blemishes. The patriotic extravaganzas of the past decade—from the Bicentennial to the Statue of Liberty—have become acts of national masturbation. Television is the unifying mirror in which we reassure, gratify, and admire ourselves.

THERE WERE times, before the Second World War, when we wanted to run away from the world, and times since then when we seemed obsessed, like some manic scoutmaster, with organizing, educating, and inspiring it. Now we no longer seem to know what we want from it. We talk about helping the downtrodden billions of the nether regions up the ladder to prosperity, but we have slashed our foreign aid budget to a pittance. We declare ourselves defender of the Free World, then become entranced by the possibility of hiding under an electronic astrodome while our friends fend for themselves. We insist on running NATO and our various minialliances our way, then are puzzled when our allies complain of being pushed around. We tell them their backyard is our front line, then threaten to abandon them when they ask us to breathe a little more softly down their necks. We urge them to be more self-reliant, then accuse them of ingratitude—if not actual *lèse-majesté*—when they try.

Call it confusion, distemper, estrangement, or simply a reordering of the world, but it is clear, as Thomas L. Hughes writes, that we are faced with "radically different assumptions, both at home and abroad, about America's relevance to the world and its engagement with the world." Hughes, president of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, which sponsored this volume to commemorate its 75th anniversary, raises some of the questions—Who is estranged from whom? How much is our fault and how much that of the stars, or even our underlings?—that the 12 authors engage in their own ways.

The essays cut across the board but emphasize mainly the postwar years. They vary widely in their approach and interpretation. Some focus on a particular period, like the Korean War or the Johnson-Nixon years; others on a theme, like isolationism or the search for invul-

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"THE STRIKING FACT about Marcos, the 'strongman,' is that he was a weak man—too weak to resist the temptation to enrich himself, too weak to erect a Gulag, too weak to massacre. Like Richard Nixon, like so many others, he was a flawed figure of just that sort of vulnerability that invites the attentions of the world's predatory packs of moralists. Marcos even tried to appease his critics by holding an election. Gorbachev and Castro could have given him some pointers."

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nerability. No one is likely to agree with all these interpretations (that might require a split personality), but they are articulate, thoughtful, and form a provocative mosaic. Particularly impressive are the pieces by Robert Dallek on American ambitions in the early postwar period; Philip Geyelin on the nation's return to its "natural and historic conditions: detached and wary of entanglement"; James Chace on invulnerability as the Holy Grail of American diplomacy; and Richard Ullman on the larger estrangement from the world outside the Washington-Moscow prism.

If the point of a book like this is to get us thinking in new ways, special mention should go to Frances FitzGerald for a dazzling piece on the links between American exceptionalism and evangelical Protestantism. Starting with Washington's Farewell Address (which preached non-alignment, not isolation), she makes a powerful historical case that isolationism in its modern sense has little meaning for the American experience. Whether the issue was the Spanish-American War or the "loss" (to the Chinese) of China in the late 1940s, the problem was not isolationism, but the dichotomy between "collective internationalism" and "imperial isolationism," to use the phrase of Charles and Mary Beard. The internationalists wanted to intervene in Europe, the imperial isolationists in Asia. They struggled and quarreled until the Truman Doctrine of 1947 brought them together in the warm embrace of anticommunism. From then on they reached a consensus that global interventionism was justified in the name of the great moral cause.

Why it became a moral cause, and not simply another dynastic struggle—why, that is, we still argue over whether the Soviet Union is a typical expansionist state seizing opportunities or an "evil empire" that must be exorcised on some cataclysmic Day of Judgment—can be found not in books of diplomacy, FitzGerald maintains, but in the book of Revelation. Protestant theologians of the 19th century prepared their parishioners for the coming battle of Armageddon, where the faithful body of Christians would meet the Beast in the final episode before Christ's return to earth. America, being the most God-fearing of nations, would provide the saints to confront the anti-Christ, now housed in Moscow.

Of course premillennialism, the doctrine underlying these gory speculations, is a minority position even among evangelical Protestants. And it certainly does not describe the liberal opposition to communism, as represented by such figures as George Orwell, Reinhold Niebuhr, and Arthur Schlesinger Jr. Still, fundamentalist preachers have had a powerful influence on American political debate. It is not only in the loopy speculations of Ronald Reagan that one can detect the lineaments of premillennial thinking. Clergymen insist that politics is the expression of the struggle between good and evil, and even quite ordinary politicians borrow that vocabulary. Thus it is not surprising that Americans should think about foreign policy in religious terms. Virtually every social movement in our country has come out of the churches. Indeed, as FitzGerald observes, "religious revivals are what the United States seems to have instead of revolutions."

If we grow up thinking of the world as divided between saints and Beasts, then clearly those who are not with us are against us, and those who are with us only sometimes might as well be against us. That is what John Foster Dulles, another clergyman's son, used to say, and it is how he conducted Eisenhower's foreign policy. As Dulles's record demonstrated, this may be the way to run a seminary, but not an alliance of nations, some of them democratic and most of them fiercely independent.

IN FACT, ever since we started signing up allies about 40 years ago, we have had considerable trouble dealing with them. We often blurred the difference between those countries that were truly allies, such as the nations of Western Europe, and those that had merely signed up for the ride and the cash payoff. Among the latter, we assumed they had enlisted in the great moral cause, when often all they wanted were bribes for the use of their real estate or for their generals and Cabinet ministers, or cheap protection from old enemies. Third World allies, or satrapies, to use the right word, are usually more trouble than they are worth, and a source of constant disappointment.

Allies have their uses. They offer terrain for bases, compliant votes in the United Nations, a dumping ground for our excess weapons. When they are rich, like the Japanese and the Europeans, they obligingly buy our Treasury bonds so that we can continue to live beyond our means. They also, by the very fact of their dependency, confirm that we are a great power. A lot of countries have allies, but only superpowers have dependencies.

There is a general rule of thumb about allies: the more important they are, the more trouble they make. Honduras and El Salvador, for example, cause no trouble at all. They let us use their countries for firing ranges and change the faces in their governments to please us. All they require is to be paid for their services. France, on the other hand, at times has seemed to take a perverse pleasure in doing the opposite of what we instruct. Yet as far as our own well-being is concerned, there is no country whose friendship and independence should be more important than that of France.

This inverse rule of alliances annoys many people, especially those who think that now that it is morning in America all the barnyard allies should start crowing. The more frustrated they are in using American muscle to accomplish

WHO DONE IT?

Who trampled down the ripe raspberry patch?
Who smashed apart the chicken coop, then fled?
Who tipped the beehive in the berry field?
Who ate the daisies? Rolled in the purple vetch?
Who left huge tracks and a black turd
Big as a turnip on the logging road?
Who's got the dogs all riled or terrified?
Who skulks in the alders by the old churchyard

While mothers crouch with children, latch and bar
Secured, and fathers boast, in Davey's Bar,
They'll bring their telescopic sights to bear. . .
How soon village decorum proves threadbare;
He points his muzzle North, where the Dipper's bare
Glints fathom a freedom he can bear.

DANIEL HOFFMAN

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much of anything—since there are few pushovers like Grenada left—the more they complain about the ingratitude and insubordination of the European allies. Critics on the hyperbolic right warn the Europeans that unless they fall into line we will get very angry and maybe even go away, leaving them all alone with the Big Bear. Yet at the same time they suggest that if the Europeans start behaving properly all will be forgiven. This threat is made ardently by learned critics, mostly those whom the Beards, were they still alive, would label "imperial isolationists." This position is logically inconsistent, and the Europeans quite properly do not take it seriously.

THERE IS AN argument to be made for getting the rich Europeans (and the Japanese) to take on a larger share of their own defense. It is inane for us to be treating Europe as though it were still bomb-shattered and impoverished. NATO should be drastically reorganized as an essentially European organization with an American nuclear umbrella. But to insist that we should stop defending the Europeans unless they salute us three times a day reflects more pique than analysis. If their independence is crucial to our security, as we insist it is, then we must be involved in their defense whether or not they are impertinent. We do this not for them, but for ourselves. If, however, they are not crucial to us, what have we been doing there all these years?

The complaint one hears these days about the European allies is not so much that they prefer to be prosperous rather than self-reliant, which is fair enough, but that they do not stroke our feathers. They don't seem to like our proxy wars in Nicaragua and Angola, our retreat from the SALT II treaty, our refusal to abide by a World Court decision that went against us, our air strike against Libya, and our creeping protectionism against their exports. They also don't seem to understand the higher realism of cutting into the markets of allies such as Canada and Australia by selling the Russians subsidized American grain. They don't quite realize that in election years realpolitik means attending first to the farm vote.

A more sophisticated complaint against the European allies is that they impede our freedom of action. We are mesmerized, it is charged, by outdated notions of internationalism and multilateral consensus. Because we try to seek the approval of our allies before undertaking any serious action, we end up most of the time merely sitting on our hands while the Soviets presumably round up the spoils. We should liberate ourselves from our allies, it is argued. We can continue to defend them, since they are too spineless and self-indulgent to defend themselves. But we should not pay any attention to whether or not they approve of our actions. If they don't like what we do, let them go hang.

This argument has a certain appeal. It's no fun being Gulliver tied down by Lilliputians. The only trouble is, it does not describe our actual relations with our allies, and it never has. When has the United States ever been deterred from doing anything it seriously wanted to do by the objections, stated or implied, of its allies? Did Truman ask anyone for permission to build the hydrogen bomb, recognize Israel, enter the Korean War, rearm Germany? What role did the allies play in Eisenhower's threat to bomb China, his coup in Guatemala, his abandonment of the British, French, and Israelis at Suez, his U-2 escapade? What influence did they exert over Kennedy's adventure at the Bay of Pigs, his handling of the Cuban missile crisis, his dispatch of the first American combat troops to South Vietnam? Or Johnson's withdrawal of forces from Western Europe to pursue a doomed obsession in Vietnam? Or Nixon's machinations in the Middle East, his secret negotiations with China, his unilateral devaluation of the dollar and repudiation of the international monetary agreement, his four-year continuation of the war in Vietnam? Or Carter's cancellation of the neutron bomb, his turnaround after Afghanistan, his "doctrine" in the Persian Gulf? Or Reagan's efforts to prevent the Western Europeans from buying Soviet natural gas, his colossal deficits that fueled European inflation, his "liberation" wars in the Third World, his unqualified support for Israel, his invasion of Grenada?

Whether or not most of these American actions were desirable, the point is that they were unilateral. We undertook them because we wanted to, and because we had the power to. We did not ask the permission of our allies. Usually we did not even bother consulting them. And when we did, their objections did not dissuade us. The notion that the United States is somehow seriously inhibited by

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its allies, that without their timorous meddling we would have long since won the cold war and sent communists creeping back to their damp caves, is a self-indulgent fantasy. The truth is that in every major instance we acted as we chose without regard to what our allies thought.

An example of how our alliances work occurred during the Cuban missile crisis, when Kennedy made a series of decisions that took the world dangerously closer to the brink of nuclear war. During the crisis he dispatched former Secretary of State Dean Acheson to Europe to explain the situation to the major allies. General de Gaulle, after hearing the explanation, turned to Acheson and asked: "Are you informing or consulting me?" To which Acheson replied: "I am informing you, *mon général*." "*Très bien*," said de Gaulle. "I believe in independent decisions." Later he proceeded to make such decisions, to the immense irritation and incomprehension of Washington.

YES, allies are sometimes a nuisance. They get involved in messy situations and then they expect us to back them up. They do things that are troublesome for themselves, and for us too. They do often influence the way we look at events and the kind of decisions we make. They are sometimes very expensive. But we tolerate all this because we think that the democratic nations we consider allies are important to us, and we still make sacrifices for them. Would the critics who think it intolerable that the European allies should have any influence over our behavior prefer it if Jerusalem were to have less influence over Washington? If so, they have been curiously mute on this point.

The old isolationism failed because it was premised on the self-deceiving notion that the United States could do as its whim dictated, that it was bound to other nations neither by ties of interest nor of sentiment. The new isolationism—which is today called "unilateralism"—is no less illusory. And it is even more dated. There was a time, shortly after the Second World War, when we had the power to behave more or less as we pleased. We had a virtual monopoly on nuclear weapons; we had an economy that fed and drove the world; we were so rich that the gold in Fort Knox became a symbol of inexhaustible wealth. It would be cruel, indeed masochistic, to recount how far we have fallen from those days. We have a military force that is useful only for Armageddon or the invasion of helpless Caribbean islands. We have become a debtor nation in hock to our former enemies, dependent on the goodwill of Japanese investors to keep from going bankrupt. We have lost the markets we once so heedlessly took for granted, and our major business has become making hamburgers for one another. Because of our single-minded obsession with military power and imperial grandeur, we have dissipated our economic base and are moving along the grim path, preceded so sadly by Britain, of imperial decline.

As this is happening we are told that we need only to stand tall, show more muscle, and cast off the sickly hesitations of irresolute allies. What the imperial isolationists have failed to notice is that the emperor has become Canute ordering back the tides. They preach a unilateralism that the United States no longer has the power to undertake successfully. The bitter truth, sad though it may be, is that we cannot do very much without the support of the allies whose opinions the new isolationists so scornfully deride. They speak boldly, like the boy who pressed the light switch all by himself and declared that he had commanded the sun to rise.

RONALD STEEL

POTOMAC PULP

The China Card
by John Ehrlichman
(Simon and Schuster, 523 pp., $18.95)

The White House Mess
by Christopher Buckley
(Knopf, 256 pp., $16.95)

"Q" Clearance
by Peter Benchley
(Random House, 352 pp., $16.95)

Ever since Henry Adams published *Democracy* more than a century ago, Washington, D.C., has avoided ambitious fictional and satirical scrutiny as if by an act of willful resistance. Not a single novelist of the first rank has considered the capital with much success since the 19th century. The loss is incalculable. Through *Anna Karenina* we know imperial Moscow and social St. Petersburg, through *The Human Comedy* the social strata of Paris. Every patch of London has known its presumptive bard. But what of Washington? Has the capital of any other empire been the source of so little literature and so much junk?

Philip Roth has wondered whether "actuality is continually outdoing our talents.... Who, for example, could have invented ... Roy Cohn and David Schine? Sherman Adams and Bernard Goldfine?" It cannot be mere coincidence that Roth chooses Washington figures to describe reality's unfailing ability to amaze. Writers on holiday to Washington customarily shift into journalistic gear. The capital's intellectual life is centered almost wholly around questions about the conduct of domestic and foreign policy. Its excitements are the ephemera of scoops, the shock of the daily.

Even the genuine artists who take Washington as a subject succeed more with history than with fiction. Adams's *Democracy*, for all its wit and accuracy, cannot match the power of *The Education of Henry Adams* or his nine-volume history of the administrations of Jefferson and Madison. For years now, the Washington novel has mostly meant chubby

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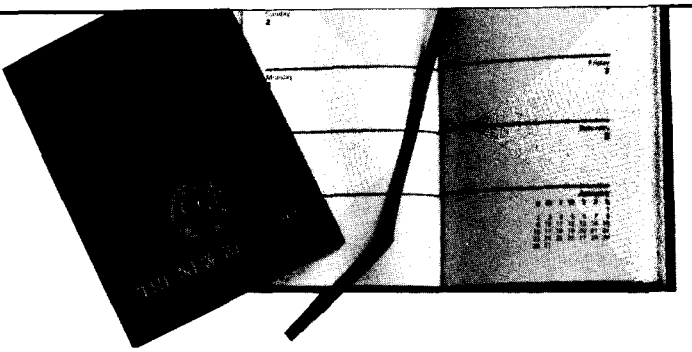
beach books—Drury's *Advise and Consent*, Safire's *Full Disclosure*, Wallace's *The Man*. Always there are the stock characters: the President, the Agent, the Senator, the Senator's Horny Wife. The last serious attempt at a Washington "novel," Mailer's *Armies of the Night*, was really a complicated formula—"History as a Novel, The Novel as History"—and not a novel at all.

A few years ago the *New York Times* proclaimed optimistically, "Capital Is Powerful Lure to Novelists." The novelists in question were, among others, Jack Anderson's partner, Les Whitten; Gerald Ford's press secretary, Ron Nessen; and five congressional wives. That is to say, no real novelists at all. Such books, no matter how amusing and hefty, are essentially slight, signed up by publishers who imagine that all manner of Washingtonians possess the mythical stature of an Insider. For if New York is the city of material privilege, Washington is the city of privileged information, a place where the gossip of and about power is a currency.

EVER SINCE John Ehrlichman left the White House for the Big House, where he discovered his literary calling, he has been trying to rewrite his own story and history with a certain cleverness, if not success. For some mysterious reason Ehrlichman's book jacket does not contain even the slightest mention of his distinguished career; the mere mention of his name, and his proximity to Richard Nixon, is about all the biography that is risked. Only his insider credentials are mentioned: "John Ehrlichman has been there in a way no other novelist has—in the Oval Office, aboard Air Force One, at closed-door briefing sessions . . ."

The China Card, a typical Washington potboiler in the Drury mode, concerns Matt Thompson, a young lawyer whose job at the New York law firm of Nixon, Mudge, Rose, Guthrie, and Alexander and whose fluency in Chinese language and politics make him a valuable adviser to the 1968 presidential candidate. Nixon is torn between his loyalties to Taiwan and his yearning to make history as the man who opened diplomatic relations with the People's Republic. Thompson subtly pushes Nixon toward history, helping him rewrite an article in *Foreign Affairs* to look more conciliatory toward Mao. Little does the president know—a familiar turn in the genre—that Thompson him-



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self is being manipulated by Peking.

Never mind the numbing dullness of the story and its offhand telling. Given who he is, Ehrlichman's motives for such a plot are intriguing. His suggestion that Nixon's most celebrated success was not his doing at all, but rather the result of a foreign intelligence operation, speaks worlds of the man's sense of vengeance. What's more, Ehrlichman draws nasty sketches of most of his former colleagues with not a whit of sympathy for any of them. Haldeman, Haig, Kissinger, even Rose Mary Woods get smacked around. The one missing character, of course, is John Ehrlichman.

WRITING IN the *Washington Post Book World*, Christopher Buckley objected to *The China Card* for its scathing portrait of Kissinger. "Hell hath no fury like a former White House official turned novelist, I guess," Buckley wrote. "This is fiction with a hidden agenda: getting even." Buckley's agenda is the opposite. He worked as a speechwriter for George Bush in 1981 and 1982, and in his nominally satirical novel *The White House Mess* he is so benign, so kindly, that in the epilogue he puts his former boss in the Oval Office in 1992.

Buckley told the *New York Times* that at the close of his job interview at the White House, Bush said, "Oh, yes, well, you know, Chris, you don't plan to write anything about your time here, do you? That might be a little awkward." Buckley assured his new boss that he had "no intention of writing a kiss-and-tell memoir." He has kept his vows. *The White House Mess* is all kiss, no tell. If it turns out that the vice president becomes the fastest fizzling frontrunner since Edmund Muskie, it will be through no fault of Christopher Buckley's. Alas.

After a good, prickly opening scene involving Ronald Reagan's refusal to leave the White House on Inauguration Day 1989, Buckley lets loose with a stream of weary jokes and setups. The new president's aide and our narrator, Herbert Wadlough, was formerly employed at the accounting firm of Dewey, Skruem, and Howe. The president is a bozo and his wife is a former soft-porn movie queen. Foreign policy focuses on the island of Bermuda, where the revolutionary party has taken over key sweater factories and golf courses. Wadlough suffers indignations. Sitcom stuff.

In the end Buckley's novel is regrettably conservative in substance and attitude—I say regrettably for literary, not political, reasons. The best satire has serious, acidic intent. But *The White House Mess* is a valentine to the once and future administration. Buckley refuses the elevated meanness of true political satirists. Compared to David Stockman's portrait of the White House as a surreal zoo in which the secretary of defense uses cartoons to lobby a daft chief executive, Buckley has produced tepid work. Clearly Reagan and Bush would rather read *The White House Mess* than *The Triumph of Politics*, which has long sections that might indeed qualify as magical realism. Stockman, however, intends only injury, not art.

PETER BENCHLEY is also a refugee from the speechwriting shop at the White House. He spent 22 months writing for Lyndon Johnson and, like his fictional alter ego Timothy Burnham, had a touch of insider status known then as "Q" Clearance, an access to certain documents that was conferred by the old Atomic Energy Commission. Benchley is a master of pulp; like *Jaws*, *"Q" Clearance* is a story of peril. Here the sharks are Russian spies, vicious presidential aides, dim-witted presidents. The White House is swimming with ephemeral power, ambition, broad comedy, and sex. As soon as he has become the president's most trusted aide, Burnham is set up by everyone—by a Mata Hari whose mother is Eva Braun, and by a White House aide who has the soul of Eva Braun. And his wife, a devoted aide to Edward Kennedy, doesn't love him anymore.

Unlike Buckley, whose opening chapter seems to promise a novel of at least some satiric ambition, Benchley begins modestly and succeeds modestly. There are some funny scenes, a few decent sketches of Wisconsin Avenue in Georgetown and of the Old Executive Office Building; he even shows a keen awareness of the insider phenomenon:

> Even the lowliest member of a typing pool bore the White House pass as a badge that set him a substantial half-step above his peers, for the mere existence of the pass suggested proximity to the President, and proximity was the capital's highest currency.

But Benchley's main intention is to keep his readers chuckling, which is rather less than fiction should intend.

WHY ISN'T there something more? Is it a fleeting taste of Washington's privileges that makes so many insider writers chary with their privileged information? It wasn't always the case. Henry Adams published *Democracy* anonymously. Doing so, he felt free to lampoon the political buffoons of his era, subjecting Thaddeus Stevens, Ulysses S. Grant, Andrew Johnson, and former Treasury Secretary G. S. Boutwell, as well as the town's social pretenders, to unrelenting scrutiny. The overall qualities of *Democracy*—its epigrammatic wit, its satiric and dramatic force—show an author who was willing to forgo celebrity in the service of truths different from, and usually higher than, the journalism of his era.

Today's Washington novelist usually serves lesser masters: power, vindication, fame, royalties. Washington has gone a century with only entertainments and agendas, and no important novels to its name. The city and the national literature await a capital author. In the meantime the best novelists living in the District of Columbia are Vassily Aksyonov and Larry McMurtry. One writes about Russia, the other about Texas.

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CAMBRIDGE DIARIST

The Dream Will Never Die, Alas

"THE DREAM WILL NEVER DIE," Senator Kennedy has said on many occasions. I believe it. Except that it's now Joe Kennedy's dream and not his uncle's or, for that matter, that of his far more serious and dignified sister, Kathleen. She also won a congressional primary in September but faces a difficult race in Maryland. Her brother is a shoo-in. Nevertheless, the attention and the energy, the money and the eros, will all be directed to the eighth congressional district of Massachusetts, where the dream began with JFK's first campaign 40 years ago. Joe is the designated heir, the vehicle for all the hopes of the restoration. He is also a lout. I do not think I have heard him deliver a sentence more syntactically complicated than "Nicetaseeya." Actually, when we ran into each other outside a Washington hotel a while back, there were no pleasantries at all. He was livid about a recent piece by TRB that was critical of his company, Citizens Energy. Face red, neck veins bulging, not quite hauling off to punch me in the face, Joe blustered that TNR had no right to publish anything about him since I'd made a campaign contribution to one of his opponents. I wish someone had told me I forfeited my constitutional rights when I contributed money to someone other than a Kennedy. Joe's campaign consisted largely of pinching or bussing the cheeks of old women at senior citizens' clubs. At Ken and Kitty Galbraith's annual Harvard commencement party, I watched Joe attempting the same technique with the Cambridge academic crowd. The reaction of some of these Brattle Street dowagers to such casual intimacies reminded me of wondering what the Queen Mother must have felt when Jimmy Carter kissed her on the lips.

FROM THE DAY JOE announced, the smart money bet on him, without much interest in what he stood for. Maybe you remember Joe's wildly leftward speech at the dedication of the Kennedy Library a few years ago. Not this time. He was the most moderate of the Democratic candidates. But he conveyed no particular conviction, which may be one reason his handlers kept him cooped up. You or they could never really know what might slip out of his mouth. Joe was fortunate in his opponents. My candidate, Jim Roosevelt, began with four percent and ended with five percent. Mel King, a black politician of the Jesse Jackson stripe, also finished just about where he started in the Jesse Jackson self-enclosure. The one challenger who seemed to have a chance was a state senator named George Bachrach, a vintage 1972 McGovernite. (This is Massachusetts, after all.) On terrorism, for example, Bachrach argued in essence that the only solution was to satisfy the terrorists' political aims. (At the end and desperate, he inveighed reluctantly against the bombing of Libya.) There was also some question about Bachrach's character. For years, in some unfathomable Machiavellian calculus, he had pretended to be Jewish. This character or Joe Kennedy: what a choice! As P. J. Corkery, sometime TNR contributor, once put it, "The rich used to give us libraries, museums, universities. Now they give us themselves."

GENTLY, CORY AQUINO took Washington by storm last week. And why shouldn't she have? She dominates a room crowded with the mighty, and not only because she is a woman of valor, as the Bible has it, but also because this valor was not something either we or she expected of her. In its new chintzy mood, the House voted the Philippines an extra $200 million in aid by only a six-vote margin. Still, it's a triumph, her triumph—and also that of Congressman Stephen Solarz, who mobilized his colleagues for this assistance and who was her ally when the administration couldn't imagine Manila under anyone other than Marcos. I suppose there may still be folk in the State Department, the Pentagon, and the CIA who yearn for the days when the Filipino president governed without democratic scruples. But the secretary of state is clearly not among these. An astute Shultz-watcher observed that he's never seen the secretary more animated than in Aquino's presence or more protective of a foreign ally. Not all of this is chivalry. At lunch at TNR recently, he eloquently defended her against charges—leaked from within the administration—that she was insufficiently hostile to her country's communist guerrillas. When a senator asked him the other night how the additional aid could be jibed with Gramm-Rudman, he said, "Why don't you just put an asterisk next to the appropriation and say it's too important to be linked to anything else?" Shultz's impatience is appropriate. The stakes are enormous, nothing but the possibility of democracy in a country we schooled for nothing less.

"TREASURES OF THE HOLY LAND," the exhibit from the collections of the Israel Museum that just opened at the Metropolitan Museum in New York, was at least a decade in the making. I was involved on the margins of this enterprise. Not in the archaeological or artistic aspects, but in the political ones. From the beginning, there was no doubt that an exquisite and exquisitely subtle show of archaeology and particularly of biblical archaeology could be mounted unveiling the layers of civilizations centered in the Holy Land, including the Christian and Moslem as well as pre-Israelite ones. There was never any question of this being a "merely" Jewish exhibit. Still, there were political problems, mostly disingenuously mustered. Some of the artifacts had been excavated in the West Bank. A few of them were from the old Rockefeller Museum in East Jerusalem. It would be hard to secure State Department indemnification against legal suits by Jordan contesting Israel's ownership of several items. The very fancy and very WASP Met board feared terrorists. The exhibit was thrown back and forth between the Met and Smithsonian like a hot potato. Of course, this was when the Arab petro-dollar also bought moral authority for Arab political grievances. It does no longer: after New York the exhibit moves to the Los Angeles County Museum of Art and then to the Museum of Fine Arts in Houston. Yes, Houston! There are some breathtaking pieces in the show, including a bronze bust of the second-century Roman emperor Hadrian, who put down the last Jewish revolt before modern times. But the lure of this exhibition is at least as much educational as it is inspirational. And then there are those figurines and masks from our prehistory that would be credits to any modern master.

M.P.

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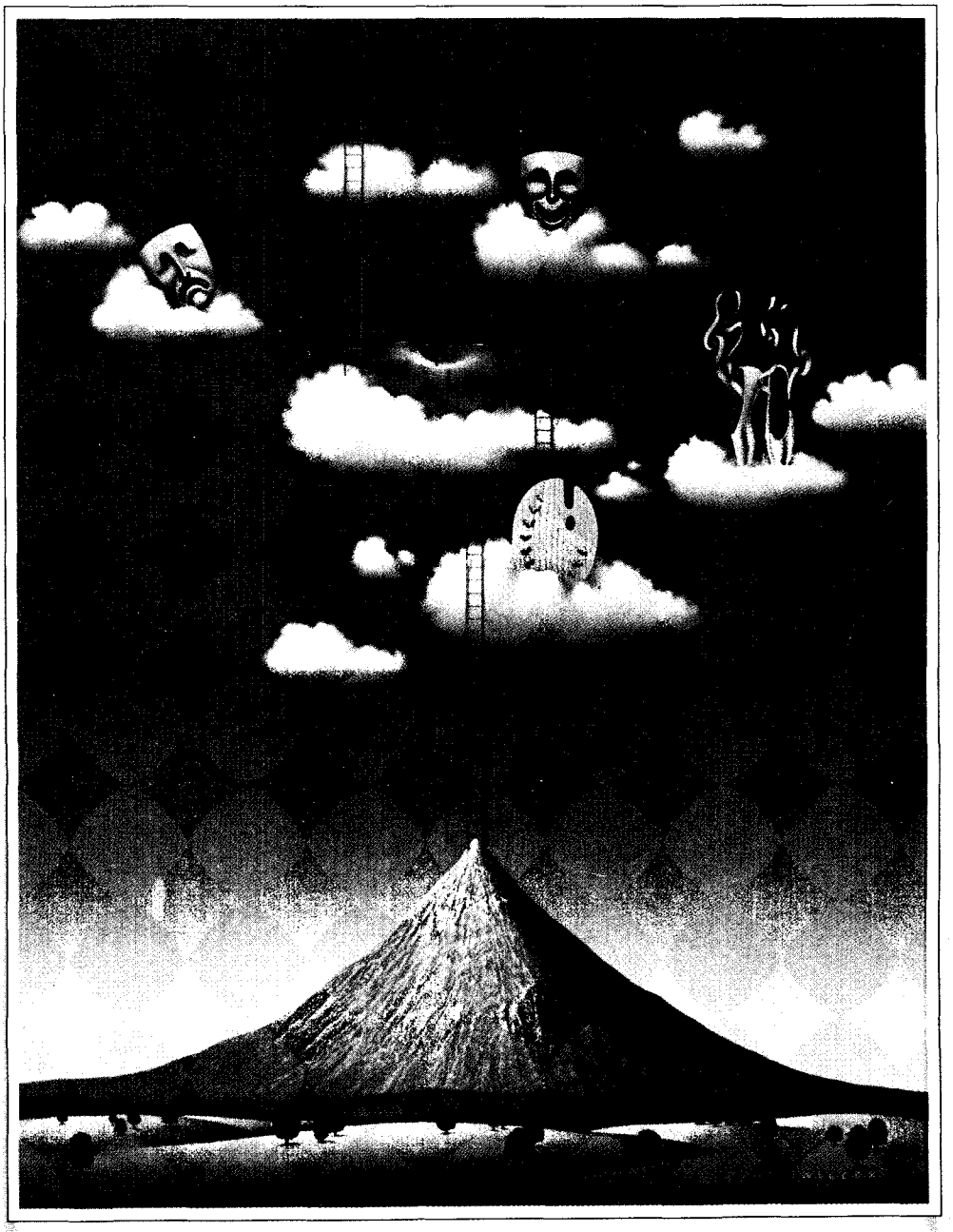

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